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TILLMAN COTT

FARMER AND
FISHERMAN

EDWIN
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SIBLEY

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STILLMAN
GOTT

STILLMAN GOTT

FARMER AND FISHERMAN

BY
EDWIN DAY SIBLEY

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TO MY MOTHER

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Preface

The story was written for the purpose of portraying the type of American citizen that can be met, seen, and known on the coast of Maine in any town from Kittery to Eastport, but particularly referring to the half farmer, half fisherman, who lives in the towns along the shores in the neighborhood of Mt. Desert.

The writer has sailed, fished, and hunted with them for many years, and each season finds him only respecting them the more. They are industrious, law-abiding, and patriotic, the three things which go to make the best citizen of the best country on God's green footstool.

If the picture is a poor one, blame the artist, not the subject. The brush and paints are poor, the artist has only the slightest idea of light and shadow; but the rugged beauty of the subject exists, even though the story may fail to show it to you.

If after you have read this book you realize that you have looked as through a glass darkly, go and see for yourself, face to face, and you will admit that at least the picture is not overdrawn.

May you enjoy reading the book as much as the writer has enjoyed writing it and seeing it grow from day to day.

STILLMAN
GOTT

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CHAPTER ONE

IT was a warm day in the early part of June, that beautiful time of the year before the heat of the summer had seared the vegetation to a dry brown and the grasshopper had begun to be a burden; all nature was fully awake after the quiet, restful sleep of winter. The long slope extending from the road down to the shore of the bay was clothed in the bright, vivid green of the new grass, with patches of dark brown scattered here and there where the land had been ploughed and sown.

Across the deep water of Dark Mountain bay rose the steep sides of Sheep island, with the gray granite ledges looking out from among the dark green spruces, and here and there a pine standing lone and tall like a giant among pig-

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mies, and away to the south one could see the lighthouse of Mussel Bay Point, white as a sheeted ghost against the bright blue of the sky beyond.

Allan Carter had just walked out from his house and seated himself on the front porch after his dinner. Having lighted his pipe he was taking a short rest before resuming the endless toil of a farmer's life, and, with his chair tipped back against the side of the house, was enjoying the solace that tobacco brings to a tired man, when the rattle of wheels caused him to look up the road. An old bay mare was coming toward him, dragging behind her a worn out open buggy in which was seated a man of about fifty-five years of age, tall and thin, with a shock of red hair showing from under an old straw hat. The farmer pulled himself up out of his chair and walked slowly down across the grass to the road.

"Hello, Still," he said. "How are you?"

"Tolerable, Allan, tolerable. How are yer? What's ther news?"

"Haven't heard any, Still. What do you hear? Anything going on?"

"No; hain't heard nothin' nor seen nothin'

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since Uncle Daniel hed his fit at last town meetin'. That's ther last thing I've seen er heard about that was interestin', an' when you come to think uv it, them fits are so common with Uncle Daniel that I've sort uv lost interest in 'em. Folks mostly lets him kick 'em out. Ain't nothin' ter do fer him. Guess folks is too busy just now ter make any 'citement, an' so Satan is out uv work."

"Any summer boarders arrived yet?"

"No, not cz I've seen er heard uv. Mebbe some, howsomever, up ter ther village. Ter tell ther truth, I hain't been up there for mor'n two weeks. Goin's kinder poor an' my hoss hez been workin' hard lately, an' so I cal'lated I'd stick pooty close ter home an' wait er while before I took my walks abroad er drove 'round any. 'Spectin' any yerself?"

"Don't know as I am, don't know as I ain't. That boy that was down here last summer from the westward may come again. Glad to have him if he wants to come, but I ain't wasting any time watching for the stage. Little early yet, anyway. They don't come much till after the Fourth."

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"No, an' judgin' from the backwardness uv ther season, nothin' else will, either. I often wonder what on earth folks ever settled round here fer anyway. May hev been that they wuz kind uv wild when they wuz young an' wanted ter punish themselves. Well, I guess I'll be joggin' down ther road toward home. Goin' ter plant a little more, an' as terday will be er good day fer that kind uv er job, guess I'll hump myself, ez ther camel sed; want ter raise somethin' 'sides rocks this spring. Why, do yer know, Allan, there's er piece uv land up back uv my house where I hev ter whittle pertaters down to er sharp p'int ter git 'em inter ther ground 'tween ther rocks, an' yet they keep on er teachin' ther scholars in ther school ter sing 'er farmer's life is ther life fer me.' Git up."

The old mare came out of her drowse and started down the road at a slow trot, the old buggy creaking and wailing behind her.

"Who was that?" inquired Mrs. Carter, as she came out to the front porch with the dish towel in her hands.

"Stillman Gott, Mary. Do you know that I never see him that I don't stop and think what

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a curious fellow he is? Honest, hard working and steady as a clock, and yet he don't seem to get ahead any. His father left him the little place where he lives and that wood lot on the island, and there he stays on that farm alone, year in and year out. Keeps his buildings looking fairly well and all that, but just manages to make both ends meet. Full of fun, and apparently never has a blue minute, and yet I should go crazy if I was in his shoes. Nothing to look forward to, as I see."

"Why, Allan," said Mrs. Carter in a tone of mild reproof, "he's got heaven to look forward to, just as much as you and I have, hasn't he?"

"Well, yes, Mary, I don't know but what he has, and I guess he has got as good a chance as any of us of getting there; but at the best that's a little uncertain, and you know we always think of it as a long way off. What I mean is nothing to look forward to in this world except hard work and plenty of that, and nobody to work for but himself. I wouldn't turn my hand over just to work for myself. While I have you and the boy and the girl, work is fun, because, you see, I'm doing something for somebody, and knowing

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that I'm helping them in some way. But if I went to bed at night feeling that all I'd done during the day was only for myself, I believe that would take all the fun out of it, and I don't know as I would do much nor do it long. Seems as though in that case I'd go over to Sheep island, build a little camp big enough to turn around in, and just do enough to keep food in my mouth and clothes on my back; let time run as fast as possible, and just long for my time to come to lay down and die. That sounds kind of heathenish, I know, but what would be the use? As it is, I'm a good deal like the fellow I read a piece of poetry about in the county paper a few days ago. I cut it out, as it seemed to just fit my case, and put it in my pocket. You listen and I'll read it to you. It's called

A CONTENTED MIND.

I hain't got much, but what I hev
Is wuth er ton uv gold:
There's fust my wife, an' then ther boy,
An' ther girl, what's twelve year old.

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I've got no money in ther bank—

They bust once in er while;

An' what's ther use uv havin' it

Ef sum cuss gits ther pile?

An' when yer think it's safe an' sound,

An' where it's right on hand,

Ther cashier starts sum cold, dark night

Fer sum queer forin' land.

I've froze an' sweat, an' dug like sin,

Right here in this small town,

An' worked merself ter skin an' bone

Ter keep ther mortgage down.

An' every year I'd make er p'int,

When int'rest day come round,

Ter hev ther stuff ter make it good

An' plank ther money down.

An' when one day I paid it off,

An' house an' farm wuz free,

It kinder sorter made me feel

That God wuz good ter me.

CHAPTER TWO

By the time that Allan Carter had again taken up the toil and burden of the day, Stillman Gott had driven along the road about a quarter of a mile and turned into the dooryard of his little home. It was a small story and a half house that had once been painted brown, but the hot sun of the summer and the fierce storms of the winter had softened and mellowed the glaring color of the original paint so that the sides of the house were in harmony with the gray moss growing on the shingles of the roof. A hen scuttled across the path, calling anxiously to her brood of chickens, and an old dog arose from the sunny spot where he had been lying and, walking down to the side of the buggy, looked up with loving look and a friendly wag of the tail.

“‘Home ergin frum er forin’ shore,’ ez ther feller sed,” murmured Still, as he led the old

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mare into the small barn that, with the henhouse, completed the buildings of the little farm.

"There, old lady, yer can eat yer dinner while I git mine, an' then we'll do er little more work uv some kind er ruther."

Going into the house, he soon placed on the table the frugal meal which he found in the closet, and seating himself, reverently bowed his head and closing his eyes, said: "Oh, Lord, I thank yer that there's ernuff fer ther stock an' somethin' fer myself, an' only ask that I may hev ther strength an' pluck ter earn our livin' ez long ez I stay here. Amen."

As soon as dinner was eaten and the dishes washed and put away in the closet, the old mare was again hitched into the buggy, and Still drove along the road to a point where a grass grown lane led off from the main road down through the woods. Turning into this road, the old mare jogged along over the narrow path until she stopped before a little house that stood in the midst of a small garden spot surrounded by the woods. At the sound of the approaching horse, a woman came to the door holding a little child by the hand. They were both shabbily dressed

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and their general appearance as well as that of the house and surroundings indicated either poverty and neglect or extreme meanness.

"Mornin', Mrs. Gould, mornin'; where's Joe?"

"He's gone fishin'," said the woman in a tone of half despair, half resignation. "Been gone two days now, but I'm expectin' him back Saturday night or Sunday."

"Huh; well, he'll probably be here. 'Tween you an' me, such fellers allers turn up. Ther Lord hain't no use fer 'em in heaven, an' so they keep on livin' here. Guess ef Jõe's wishes wuz ter be consulted, he'd like nothin' better than ter be in heaven with nothin' ter do but walk ther golden streets an' play er harp. Ther only thing I ever knew Joe ter do middlin' decent wuz ter play er fiddle, so I guess he'd take to er harp reel easy. 'Seuse me fer talkin' so right out in meetin', but I ain't tellin' yer no news. You know ez well ez I do that Joe hed er good start an' might hev been half decent, but bein' ez his motter hez allers been, 'what is home without er jug,' it's landed him jest where he is, high an' dry, an' come ter think uv it, most allers dry. It's er long lane that hezn't got er demijohn on

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it fer Joe. But we'll let that drop, ez the feller said when he picked up ther hot brick. That's neither here ner there. I wuz over through ther woods er cruisin' round last week, an' I made up my mind by ther looks uv things that ef Joe hed somebody ter jest take hold uv him an' give him er shove, mebbe he'd work fer one day anyway, an' fix things up er little round here. I'm er believer in woman's rights to er sartain extent, but I don't go so fer that I let 'em fit up ther wood fer ther stove, an' that's what I seen yer doin' uv last week. So thinks I, I'll go over some day an' see if I can't shame him inter workin' er little an' doin' some uv ther chores round ther house. Thought I'd find him home sure terday, but ez long ez he ain't, I'll do it myself. By ther way, come ter think uv it, there's er few bundles uv things in ther buggy that yer better take out. Few little things I hed kickin' round ther house, an' thought they might spile ef I didn't git red uv 'em."

Taking the saw and axe that stood by the chopping block, Still began sawing and splitting up some cordwood that lay on the ground behind the house, and soon had several weeks' sup-

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ply heaped up. Then taking an old scythe hanging up on the side of the house, he mowed the weeds in the "dooryard," raked them up and threw them into the pig pen.

As he finished clearing up the space in front of the house, the woman came out, and with tears in her eyes, said: "Still Gott, you ain't no angel, because you're er human bein', but you're as nigh to one ez they make on this earth."

"Shaw, Mandy," said Still with a smile, "what yer talkin' erbout? Ain't no job ter cut up er little wood, an' ez fer them things I fetched over, they cluttered up my house so I didn't want 'em. Ez fer not bein' an angel, I guess yer right. I hain't got pinfeathers, say nothin' uv wings."

"Well, now, Still Gott, it's ther fust time I ever knew flour an' sugar an' tea an' butter cluttered er house up. I know why you brought 'em, an' while Joe ought ter be ashamed ter hev me obliged ter take things frum neighbors, I'm jest ez thankful ez I can be."

"'Tain't necessary, Mandy, ter thank me at all. Ef I've got more'n I need uv anythin', it's my duty ter give it ter somebuddy else, an' so, ez I sed, I brought it over here ter git red uv it.

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Sun's gettin' down, an' I guess I'll be headin' fer home," and, getting into the old buggy, Still turned the aged mare around, and in a few moments was lost to the view of the grateful woman and wondering child.

"Seems kinder queer how things turn out," mused Still, as he jogged along over the grassy road. "Ther good book says ther ways uv ther Lord are parst findin' out, an' so I better not spend much time guessin', but what in thunderation she married thet man fer, I dunno. I s'pose it might er been er good deal worse, ez ther feller said when he buried his mother-in-law, but Joe always wuz er lazy cuss frum ther time he wuz big ernuff ter walk, an' she knew it if she'd ever stopped ter think. Come uv er poor crowd, an' his mother an' father were just like him. Poor run-out stock, ez fer back as I kin remember, an' Mandy grew up on er farm an' ought ter hev known that yer can't raise trottin' hosses frum crowbaits. Nothin' an' nothin' make nothin', jest ez much in human bein's ez in figgers. Thank ther Lord, that child takes after her folks an' not after his, an' mebbe she'll amount ter somethin', ef only she can git er lift out uv

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ther muck she's in now. Why, er Berkshire hog with any bringin' up wouldn't be satisfied with ther way they live. Ez fer Joe himself, he ain't fit ter live with horned cattle. Well, ther Lord's will be done, ef it wuz His, but it don't seem ez though it could er been. Ef matches are made in heaven, I swanny that one of Joe's and Mandy's wuz made one day when nobuddy wuz tendin' ter bizness. G'long, Nellie."

The only romance in Still's life had been when he was a young man of about twenty-five. Joe, Mandy and Still had all attended the district school together as children, and as young people had met frequently at church and at the little social gatherings in the town. Still, as well as Joe, had fallen in love with the girl, and for a short time there had been a sharp rivalry between them for her favor. But the quick tongue and skyrocket ways of Joe had attracted the girl more than the quiet, thoughtful manner of Still, and so she had made her choice, as many a woman had done before her, and as many more will do as long as the world lasts.

Joe had started well enough, owning a good farm left him by his uncle, but too constant

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loafing around the village evenings, and a persistent endeavor to drink all the hard cider manufactured in the neighborhood, had brought him to a point where, although it could not be said that his family were in the poorhouse, yet they lived on the same road and knew all the inmates.

The road up hill to success had been too difficult a journey for Joe, while the descent from something to nothing was easy travelling, and required no exertion. A lazy man never has been successful since the Almighty sat down to rest after the stupendous undertaking of creating a world, and the first mistake Adam and Eve made was to begin life doing nothing. And when these two inexperienced beings broke one of the laws laid down for their guidance, Omniscience, pitying their weakness, punished them by conferring upon them man's greatest blessing, hard work.

CHAPTER THREE

A certain witty person once said that electric cars were not needed in the town in which he lived, because "every person lived just where he wanted to go. It was only a short walk to all the stores, and as everybody's relations lived in the town they did not need to travel a mile even to visit all their friends."

The town of Bartlett was in many respects a fair example of the place above described. Situated on a neck of land beyond the limits of railroads and only visited once a week in the summer by a small steamboat, very few of the inhabitants ever saw the necessity of going beyond "the village," as the centre of the town was called, except the few young men who went "coasting" on the small schooners which took kiln wood to Rockland or brought flour, corn

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and other articles of commerce from Boston or Portland to the village stores.

It was in no sense true that the people were ignorant or narrow-minded. Far from it. Most of them read a daily paper, selected according to their respective political beliefs, and what was more, believed every word therein. This paper and a weekly "County Clarion," which contained all the local news, a few agricultural suggestions, a little poetry by local talent, and a short story comprised all the literature which in their opinion was necessary to keep up with the times. They knew nothing of the stock market, except the one controlling the price of cattle and sheep; opera and symphony concerts were unknown words; their vocal music was the liquid note of the robin, the creak of the gull, the miniature watchman's rattle of the red squirrel and the lonesome cry of the loon calling to his mate; while the breeze softly whispering through the tops of the spruces, and the ever constant sound of the waves beating against the rocky shore were symphonies far more beautiful than any ever conceived by mortal minds.

Even in the matter of religion they were not

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Even in the matter of religion they were not

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torn by conflicting beliefs. Their faith was strong but simple. Living as they did at the feet of old Ocean, the majority of them were firm believers in the Baptist faith, although the village boasted of two other small meeting houses, the Orthodox and the Methodist. The good people differed, and yet they agreed; they had their petty differences, yet never a violent quarrel that came to blows, and rarely a law suit. The village squire lived, but never fattened off his neighbors, nor would he have desired to if he could, for they were old friends always and clients only occasionally.

So too in the giving and taking in marriage. They fell in love with each other because they had been born and had lived side by side and knew each other thoroughly, and therefore knew whom to seek and whom to avoid. An occasional man lived and died unwed because he was shiftless and every woman knew he would be a poor provider, and a few women lived the life of single blessedness, either because there were not men enough to supply the demand or because they were known to have sharp tongues and a temper of their own. It was well nigh impossible to go

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back farther than one's grand-parents without being able to trace a relationship to almost every person in the town, and so they lived out their lives as their fathers had before them, and as their children would when they were gone, one great family of industrious, law-abiding, God-fearing people.

There had been people by the name of Day and Locke in the town of Bartlett ever since the time when the Indians first saw white men sailing up the bay in the "great canoes," and consequently the two families had always known each other and were connected by numerous inter-marriages among their forefathers.

The farms of Stephen Day and Josiah Locke lay side by side, extending, as all the farms on the Neck did, from one side of the road down to the shore of the bay, and from the other side back to the spruce woods, and so continuing to the salt pond which was formed by the ever restless waters of old ocean rushing in and out with each incoming and outgoing tide through a narrow opening in the land.

The sons and daughters had gone to school and church together, and one by one had left

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the farm to seek a home of their own, until finally there was only one child left in each family, Elinor Day and Edward Locke. And they had begun as their brothers and sisters had, walking hand in hand to school, carrying their little baskets of luncheon; but whereas the others had grown apart as they became older and their youthful affection had stood still, except so far as it had been strengthened by years of friendship, these two scions of the old ancestral trees continued side by side as the years came and departed.

The bashful youth had walked with the sweet, sunny-haired girl day after day, hardly daring to cast even an eye of admiration, much less one of affection toward her, while she had accepted his companionship because it pleased her rather than because she desired his presence near her, or because she even dreamed of love.

As they grew older they attended church with their parents, and in time arrived at the age when they could be trusted to go to prayer-meeting without any danger of their going to sleep during the exercises, and at last they graduated into the monthly church sociables and thus made

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their appearance in society.

The two had grown nearer together through this series of steps, and it had become a recognized fact among the other youthful swains that it was a useless waste of time to attempt to see Elinor Day home, for Edward Locke was not only always the first at her side when prayer-meeting "let out" or the sociable "broke up," but he was never refused. And he grew to love her as spring brightened into summer, summer ripened into autumn, and autumn faded beneath the cool blasts of on-coming winter, and he counted that day lost when he did not see her and hear the sound of her voice, if only for a moment, and thus she became almost his very life. For her sake he worked, for her sake he had his ambitions, and for her he would have dared anything.

He had been satisfied with the life on a farm until his love for her had caused him to build air castles and to hope for fame and fortune that he might lay their fruits at her feet. And consequently, against the wishes of his father, he left the farm, and for months had been employed on the county paper assisting the editor in "get-

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ting out" that wonderful sheet which, like all other newspapers, was dedicated to the promotion of the public's welfare, but which meanwhile did not refuse subscriptions or advertising.

He had continued to see her at every possible opportunity when at home, and when he first left the farm for the neighboring town where the paper was published, realizing the awful fact that he would not see her for one long week, each day of which seemed a decade to him, he had called at her house to bid her good-bye with the same feeling of impending sorrow and loss which an older and more experienced person would have felt had he been on the eve of leaving wife and children for a term of years.

They sat in the parlor on the old-fashioned haircloth sofa for over an hour, he, too full of grief and sorrow to speak, and she, lightly chatting of the wonderful change he was going to make, and of her envy of his chance to see the world. For to her limited vision the whole world and all therein contained was situated just outside of Bartlett. He had answered her with yes or no whenever she stopped to take a new breath in order to begin again, but finally his

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love for her swept over him as a mighty wave sweeps over a bit of sand carrying everything before it. He turned toward her, and said:

“Elinor, it seems to me as though I was going away tomorrow for years. You know I am leaving home for the first time. It will be terribly lonesome for me, and I do not think I could bear it if I did not feel that I had Sunday to look forward to. You and I have been friends for years, I cannot remember when we were not, and I know that I am going away from home for your sake more than I am for my own. I want to be able some day to come to you and offer you a home as my wife, for, Elinor, you are the only girl I ever loved or ever shall love. Will you wait for me? Some day will you be my wife? You know my love for you; you must know it. You must have seen it in every word I spoke and in every look I gave. Tell me, Elinor, that you care for me, won't you?”

For a while the girl did not speak, and a look of mingled fear and awe crept over her face. And then turning toward her lover, she said: “Edward, I—I never dreamed that you felt that way toward me. I knew you liked me as I al-

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ways have liked you. I have always been happy to have you near me, always felt that I had a true friend in you, one to whom I could go at any time and be sure that whatever you said was right. But when you tell me that you love me, when you say that you are leaving home for my sake and against the wishes of your father, it frightens me. It does not seem to me as though it was right for me to let you do all that for me unless I would be willing to do as much for you, and I don't know as I could. I have never thought of leaving home. I have always thought that I should be with father and mother as long as they lived, and yet now I realize that if I loved you as I know you love me, I would turn my back to the world and go into a desert and be happy with you. I wish I could tell you that I loved you, but somehow I don't dare to say it. It would be a terrible thing to tell you that I did, and then learn later that I had misunderstood my feelings. What could I do if I found that I had made a mistake, and that I loved some other man? Should I tell you and ruin your life, or live a lie and ruin my own? I don't know my own heart, Ed, I honestly don't. I

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care for you more than I do for any one on earth, except my father and mother, but I have seen so few people. Oh, Ed, why couldn't we have stayed as we were, good friends? I am so sorry you told me. You can't unsay it, and if you tried to I should know just the same what your feelings toward me were. I can't tell you I love you; I wish I could. All I can say is: I care for you, I know I do, and I will try to love you."

And then they sat silently on the sofa side by side, his arm around her waist and her head upon his shoulder; he dreaming of the great things he would accomplish for her sake, and she wondering whether she had better let him go on dreaming his happy dream or awaken him to despair and vanished hope. The clock on the mantel struck nine, and the hour for Edward's departure had arrived. They walked to the door together and parted and bade each other good-night a dozen times, and then Edward walked down the road toward his father's house. The stars seemed to be shining brighter than ever before, and the silence of the evening whispered to him the song of joy and hope. What a good world this was and how fortunate he was! Well,

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he would try to deserve it all, and be worthy of her.

He turned as he opened the door of his home and looked up the road toward the house where she lived, and as he gazed he saw the light go out in her chamber. "God bless her," he murmured, and closed the door.

CHAPTER FOUR

As Still sat reading the county paper one Sunday afternoon the door opened and Edward walked in.

"Still," said he, in a hesitating manner, "may I talk with you a few moments?"

"Sartin, Ed, sartin. Come right in, take er chair, an' fire away. How yer doin' on ther paper? Wuz jest readin' it, but uv course dunno what part you wrote, an' so can't find out erbout yer 'cept by askin'. Like it ez well ez ever, er are yer comin' back an' goin' ter farmin' ergin?"

"Yes, I like it, and I shall stick to it. I shall never come back to father's farm unless I find that it is impossible for me to earn my living in some other way. I hate to disappoint father, but I loathe farming. It isn't that I am afraid of hard work. Father never complained about the manner in which I did anything he asked me

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to do, or that I didn't do it well, but I never liked it, and was always anxious to be doing something other than hoeing potatoes or getting in hay. I admit that it is an honorable life and an independent one, but I don't like it, and it seems to me that a man is not making the most and best of himself in doing something he has no interest in, if he can possibly find some other business or profession that he does enjoy and one he is fitted for, either naturally or by education.

"Now I have worked for nearly six months on the county paper, and I enjoy my work, and, what is more to the point, the editor has told me that he believes newspaper work is my calling. I had a long talk with him yesterday before I started for home, and he advises me to go to Boston and get a position on one of the large newspapers there. He said that, of course, I could stay with him as long as I wanted to, but there was a certain limit to the salary and to the opportunities, beyond which I could never expect to go on a small country paper.

"Now I want your advice. I can't go to father, because he is so disappointed at my not staying on the farm that he won't say anything except

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‘do as you please as long as you won’t stay here.’ You may think it a strange thing, my coming to you, but I have always liked you, and have always considered you a man of good sense and judgment. You always had a kind word for us boys, and so I felt you would tell me what to do. It is a great venture for me to go to a great city like Boston with nothing but a letter of recommendation from the editor of a little country newspaper, but I am willing to make the effort and see if I cannot succeed. What do you think of it?”

“Ed, yer’ve been er good boy ez long ez I’ve known yer. Guess yer haven’t stole no more apples, er gone in swimmin’ ergenst yer mother’s orders any oftener than any healthy, live boy would,” said Still with a twinkle in his eye. “It’s er pretty hard thing fer me ter decide. I had er talk with er city feller last summer what was boardin’ up ter ther village, an’ judgin’ frum what he told me erbout city life money wouldn’t hire me ter live there. Ev’rybuddy ter his likin’, ez ther monkey sed when he married ther hen, but ez fer me, I’d ruther hear ther patterin’ uv ther rain on ther shingles uv this little house

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than ther infernal buzzin' uv them trolley cars; an' I wouldn't swap ther singin' uv ther birds in ther mornin' an' ther chirp uv ther cricket in ther evenin' fer ther hollerin' uv some drunken loafer under my winder, fer all ther money in ther County Bank. I kin go ter bed here an' ef I don't lock ther door it don't make no difference, but in ther city I'm told that yer hev ter lock up ev'ry winder ef yer want ter keep what belongs ter yer. However, it don't foller because I wouldn't like it that you won't. Then, ergin, you want ter be careful that what yer startin' in ter do is what yer fitted fer. Sometimes er feller thinks he hez 'er call ter do somethin' er other, when ther truth is ther call is so darned low 'twould be better fer him ter pay no 'tention ter it. Now, ef you've chewed it all over an' made up yer mind that yer want ter try it, an' that is what yer built fer, why, jest spit on yer hands an sail in, an' don't give up till yer've given it er good hard trial. There, that's all I've got ter say. Now use yer own good sense."

"Still," said Ed, "I've thought it all over, and as far as that question is concerned, I have decided to go; but what I particularly want your

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advice on is leaving home and going contrary to father's wishes."

"Oh, yer want ter ask me whether yer shall mind yer father er not?" said Still, with a smile. "Well, that's er hard one. On general principles, I say yes. I allers minded mine, an' I ain't sorry fer it yet, my boy. Yer father's older'n you are an' got more judgment. Most boys don't think so, an' they gen'rally hev er better idee uv their own judgment an' brains than they'll ever hev ergin ef they live to be ez old ez old Deacon Simpkins, an' he wuz er hundred an' three when he died; but in this case, yer father's judgment ain't any better'n mine, an' mine ain't good fer nothin', because yer see we don't know nothin' erbout newspapers 'cept ez we read 'em. I think that other things bein' equal, yer've er right ter go ter Boston an' try yer luck, an' when I say try yer luck I don't mean ter sit down waitin' fer good luck ter hunt yer up. Doin' that is er good deal like settin' down in er fifty acre lot waitin' fer er cow ter back up ter yer ter git milked. She won't do it, an' while yer waitin' some other feller hez hunted her up an' filled his pail. Most uv ther people in Bartlett that's sot round wait-

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in' fer luck are in ther poor house now. Hunt fer good luck, an' hunt hard, an' when yer find it grab onto it an' use yer brains good an' quick fer all yer wuth. I say go, do yer best, an' ef yer find you've made er mistake, come home like er man an' say so."

"I'm much obliged to you," said Edward. "Now there's one thing more I want to ask you. You probably have noticed that I have been paying attention more or less to Elinor Day, and as far as we are concerned, matters are nearly settled, that is, I hope they are. But her father is just as much opposed to my leaving the farm as my own father. I was up there last evening, and he came into the room where Elinor and I were sitting. He asked me what I was doing at the present time, and if I intended going to Boston. I told him that I had about decided to make a change, and that if I did so, it would be with the intention of going to Boston and trying to get a position on a newspaper there. We had quite an argument about my going and my unwillingness to stay on the farm and 'let well enough alone,' as he called it. Then he got angry and told me that if I stayed at home and took

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father's farm, he had no objection to my coming to see Elinor, but otherwise he would object to any such thing. Elinor cried, and told him that we could settle matters between us, but that made no difference. Finally, he told me not to come to the house again or write Elinor until I either gave up all thoughts of leaving Bartlett, or showed him that I was earning enough to support his daughter in a decent manner. As I am earning only eight dollars a week now, of course that settled the question for the present. Now it will be hard enough for me to go to a strange city and live away from all my people and friends, but I must in some way hear about Elinor once in a while. She has told me that she will wait for me as long as I want her to, and that she will be patient and loyal if she only knows I am well and succeeding. Will you write me once in a while and let me know how she is, and then when I answer your letter you can tell her how I am getting along? Will you do this for me, Still?"

"Yes," said Still, hesitatingly, "I'll do it, but I ain't much uv er writer, an' you'll hev ter take what yer git in ther way uv letter writin' an' be

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satisfied. How often do you cal'late ter hear frum me?"

"Twice a week," replied Edward impetuously, "and as much oftener as possible."

"Andrew Jackson an' several other Pres'dents! Why, Ed, I hain't wrote er letter in ten years. Yer see, ther only people I hev any dealin's with live nigh ernuff so's I kin reach 'em by drivin' er few miles. I'll tell yer what I'll do. I'll git some paper an' envelops, an' ev'ry Sunday after church an' after I git sort uv squared away, I'll send yer some word er ruther. Now don't expect anythin' alarmin' in the way uv er letter, 'cause I ain't used to it, an' I'll hev ter go by what I see an' hear an' what she may say whenever I happen ter run ercross her. They'll proberbly read er good many times like what happened once in town meetin'. They wuz er committy app'inted to investigate somethin', an' it seems as though ev'ry one on ther committy kind uv laid down on ther rest ter do what wuz necessary. When they got tergether ter make up their report they found nothin' hed been done, so they come inter the next meetin' an' sed, 'Ther committy report progress, an' ask fer ferther time.'

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You go erhead an' tend ter bizness an' don't fret yer head erbout Bartlett. No news'll be good news. Think uv yer work fust an' girls next. There's more girls in ther world than chances ter git erhead, though proberbly jest now it seems to yer ez though there wuz only one girl in the whole state uv Maine, 'though, ez er matter uv fact, there's quite er parcel uv 'em. There, that's all I've got ter say erbout it. How yer fixed fer ready money?"

The young man's face flushed, and for a moment he made no answer. Then he replied, "Still, I wouldn't answer that question for any other living being but you, for I am proud and sensitive about such things; but I know you have asked the question from your heart, without any desire to pry into my affairs, and only because you are interested in me. For that reason I am going to be frank with you. Of course, while I have been away I have had my board and room rent to pay, and I was obliged to purchase some new clothing; but I have got fifty dollars saved up, and I have no doubt I shall get employment before that is gone."

Still arose from his chair, went into his little

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bedroom and closed the door. The young man turned and gazed out of the window across the blue waters of the bay, and in fancy's dreams saw himself returning to Bartlett in a few months' time, "bearing his blushing honors thick upon him."

"Kind uv pooty place ter leave, ain't it?" said a voice behind him, and Edward turned around, and saw Still standing near his chair. "Dream-in', wuzn't yer? An' pleasant dreams, I s'pose? Well, hev all yer kin uv 'em now, fer when yer git erlong in years an' stop ter do anything uv that sort, some uv 'em, 'stead uv bein' dreams, will turn out nightmares. Dreams, when yer young an' lookin' forrard, is pleasant things; but when yer old an' lookin' back, it's like look-in' inter er graveyard fer lively company. I used ter hev dreams when I wuz your age, an' plan out more things that never come true than yer could shake a stick at; but uv late years when I do it, which ain't very often, I only dream uv ther other side uv Jordan, an' my mother, an' father, an' my sister what's livin' there. Most uv ther lookin' when yer git my age is lookin' back instead uv forrard. But I'll quit that kind

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uv talk 'cause that ain't what yer want, an' git down ter bizness. Now, Ed, fifty dollars ain't er flea bite in Boston; won't last yer six weeks ef yer git out uv work. You've been used ter good beds an' good livin', an' what yer git here fer most nothin' will cost er pile up in Boston. Ez nigh ez I kin jedge frum what I've heerd, ther folks that used ter look after young fellers what came frum ther country an' give 'em er helpin' hand, hez mostly died er moved out uv town. You're only one little grain uv sand er-mong er thousand big rocks. It's er case now uv dog eat dog, an' most uv ther dogs is poor, yaller, hungry houn's. Keep yer eyes skinned, yer ears opened an' one fist doubled up all ther time, an' yer'll pull through, I guess. So fur, so good. What I'm comin' at is this. I've got er hundred dollars here what I ain't no use fer, an' yer take it till yer git sort of squared away an' ev'ry sail er drawin'. Now don't git yer Eben-ezer up at what I'm sayin', 'cause I ain't goin' ter give it ter yer, only sort uv lend it. An' when yer git so much money on hand that it sort uv bothers yer ter keep track uv it, why, send it back; an' ef yer never send it back, why, I dunno any

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better way uv investin' it than lettin' some likely young feller like you hev it."

The young man stood silent for several moments with trembling lips and tearful eyes. Then grasping Still's hand, he said, "I won't thank you because I know you don't want me to, but if I ever forget you and what you have done for me it will be because I am dead."

"That's all right, all right, Ed," answered Still. "Lots uv folks would do thè same ef you'd asked 'em ter. Now, ef when that's gone, ther sled-din's kind uv poor an' there's er good many bare spots in ther road, let me know, an' I'll try an' spare er little more. I shan't need it, 'nless ther mare dies er something like that, an' she looks good fer some time to come. I wuz thinkin' uv buyin' er melodian with it, an' takin' music lessons an' givin' up farmin', but we'll let that go fer now," he added, with a smile. "Good-bye an' good luck."

As the young man walked down the road away from the house, Still stood at the window and watched him until he disappeared from sight. Then turning away with a sigh, he sat down in the old rocking chair that stood beside the stove,

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and for several moments was silent.

The clock on the shelf over the stove ticked away merrily, the cat rubbed against his legs, and soon the old dog arose from his comfortable place on the floor, stretched himself, and, coming over to his master, placed his head upon Still's knee and looked up into his face with eyes that were almost human in their pleading.

"No, Tige," said Still, as he patted the dog's head affectionately, "yer can't help me one mite, though I know yer would ef yer could. An' what makes it wuss, nobuddy kin but ther Almighty, an' he don't intend ter ez fer ez I kin see. The Lord's will be done, but it's orful tough. I ain't complainin', but it's more'n I kin understand. There's men an' women in this town, piles uv 'em, that never ort ter hev been married. Wust thing that ever happened to 'em, an' yit they never hed no trouble gittin' hitched up. An' there's other couples what ain't fit ter raise er white pine dog with er popple tail, an' they hev so many children they can't keep track uv 'em er think uv names ter give 'em. An' here I've been eatin' my heart out fer more'n thirty years fer some one I could call my own, willin' ter

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work my fingers down ter ther bone fer wife an' children, ef I hed any, an' I'm sent through ther world with nothin' but er dog ter take care uv. An' proberbly somewhere in ther world there's er lonely woman er feelin' jest ther same ez I do, with er big motherly heart er dryin' up an' dryin' up ez ther years roll by. Ef I could hev found that woman we'd both been happy, but it wuzn't ter be, it wuzn't ter be. Yer kin erdopt somebuddy's else children uv course, but they ain't yer own flesh an' blood, an' at ther best yer'd only be doin' yer duty, an' it would only be er cheap imertation uv ther reel thing, an' yer wouldn't fool yerself one half minute. Yer'll enjoy 'em an' all that, uv course, but er feller will never know what it is ter reely live till he hez some uv his own, an' praises God one minute that he's got 'em, an' gits frightened blue ther next, erfraid he's goin' ter lose 'em. I s'pose it's all right, an' I ain't complainin', but I ain't reconciled one single bit, an' there'll be er hungry spot in my heart ez long ez I live. It's an awful thing ter hev ter think that when yer time's come ter go that yer leavin' none uv yer own blood behind yer. Well, this ain't er doin' no good settin'

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here mournin' erbout what I never hed an' never kin hev."

And the lonely man arose from his chair with a sigh, and went about attending to his duties.

CHAPTER FIVE

The desolation of a shipwrecked sailor alone on the wide ocean, with nothing between him and death but a broken spar, and nothing for the eye to rest upon but the sky and the trackless deep, has been so often pictured and described that any person can understand the situation; but the awful loneliness of a young man in a strange city, full of people yet empty, teeming with life yet death personified, cannot be described. It must be personally realized, must be endured by one's self, before it can be even imagined.

To Edward Locke, fresh from the regular routine life of a country town in which the only excitement was the daily arrival of the small steamboat and the annual number of deaths and marriages, the rushing business life of a great city with its constantly changing views was a source of enjoyment and study for a few days.

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He had sought out the editor of the great paper to whom he had a letter of introduction, and, after sending in his name, stating his business and waiting nearly a half-hour in an anteroom, had been ushered into the august presence.

“Mr. Locke, I believe,” the great man had said. “Glad to meet you. Remember your former employer very well. We started together in the newspaper business. Haven’t seen him for a good many years, but pleased to know that he has not forgotten me. Understand from his letter that you have had some experience in newspaper work, and desire to connect yourself with a paper here in Boston. Good field for a smart young man, and the poorest place I can imagine for one who has only ordinary ability and is not possessed of more than an average gift for this particular profession. Very few of the first kind, and the name of the latter is legion. We have no vacancy at present for one of the first class, and never intend to have a place for one of the second. Will bear you in mind and endeavor to give you an opportunity to see if you can be of use to us as soon as a chance offers itself. Good-day, sir.”

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Edward was out of the office and on the sidewalk before he fully recovered from the reception he had received. He had expected that the editor would have been pleased to hear from his old friend, so pleased that it would have taken some time to have answered all the inquiries about his former employer; that eventually the great man would have managed to find out all he desired to know about his old friend, and then would have come the question of finding a place in the office for him.

How many times he had seen his old employer stop in the middle of an editorial he was writing to greet an old friend, take his pipe, light it, and tip his chair back preparatory to a long friendly chat. Yes, and when the friend rose to go, urge him not to hurry and to come again soon. And this man! Why, he was the coldest blooded mortal he had ever had the ill luck to meet! He didn't appear to be busy either. Well, never mind, there were other offices in town, other papers published that probably needed assistance.

With this idea in mind, Edward visited the office of every newspaper in the city with equally poor success. In fact, in none of them did he

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even see the editor-in-chief, being invariably directed to see some assistant, and as often informed that they needed no addition to their force in any department. If he could have judged from the noise and confusion going on in each place he visited he would have imagined that not one, but a dozen new assistants were needed at once.

Little by little he began to realize that while the task of a country editor was to get news enough to fill his paper, the only question in the minds of those who managed the papers in a great city was what to select out of the great mass of matter brought to their attention.

For two long weeks he wandered about the city like a lost soul, every day getting more accustomed to the rush and confusion, and each morning finding himself with less money and a fainter hope and courage. At the end of that time, as his early habits of industry would not allow him to sit in idleness any longer, he began to look for work of any kind, and a few days later found him working in the great market of the city, toiling as he had never been obliged to work on his father's farm, but earning a living.

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He had written to Still every week, and each letter had brought a reply, but as yet nothing in the way of a letter from the cold, distant man in Boston from whom he had expected so much.

One night, however, when he returned to the boarding house place, where he had passed the hours when he was not working, and which he regarded as the poorest excuse for a home that one could imagine, a letter awaited him that told him that he had not been entirely forgotten. Getting permission from his employer to be away for an hour, the next morning he hastened at the appointed time to the newspaper office. Awaiting his turn, he was again ushered into the private office of the editor.

"Oh, yes," said the editor, as soon as he had again introduced himself, "you are the young man that brought me the letter of introduction from my old friend a few weeks ago. Got any situation? Down in the market, eh? Well, that's work, even if it is not what you want to do. What did you start in that business for?"

Edward explained that he did not want to be idle, in fact, could not afford to be, and so had taken the first chance that offered itself while

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waiting for a better one.

“Good idea,” said the editor, “never did like a man who sat around waiting for a particular situation and meanwhile refused every other one. Shows that you are willing to work. Now comes the test of your fitness for this particular kind of work. Better give your present employer a week’s notice and then report to the city editor. Good day.”

CHAPTER SIX

“Hello, here’s a letter from Ed. Poor feller, guess he’s blue ernuff. Last letter I got he hadn’t got no job in er newspaper office, an’ no likelihood, uv one, either. Let’s see what he says”— And Still opened the envelope, took out the letter and began to read it aloud.

Boston, Mass., ———.

Dear Still:

I have got a situation at last, and on the best paper in Boston at that. Twenty dollars a week, and if I do good work I am assured of an increase. The work is a little hard at first, as I am not accustomed to the streets yet, and therefore lose a good deal of time finding places to which I am sent. Really, the time I spent wandering around before I got to work at all was well spent, although it did not seem so.

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The editor-in-chief is a man who wastes very little time on his subordinates. He engages one in a moment and discharges another as quickly. The first thing happened to me, and the second to a man who has been on the paper about a year. I asked one of the other fellows what the trouble was with him, thinking I would find out in that way what to avoid, and he replied, "Guess he anointed his breath too often."

The younger portion of the editorial force are a study to me, for they are the ones for me to imitate to a certain extent. They are bright smart and energetic, and apparently all on the lookout for a chance to better themselves on the paper.

I had a few moments interview with the editor-in-chief the other day. Did not suppose he had remembered my existence. He stopped me and inquired if I liked my work. I told him I did, and that the only unpleasant thing connected with it was my constant fear of making some mistake that would lose me my situation. He smiled and said, "that fear of losing your situation will, if properly controlled, probably keep it for you." Said he had inquired about me and

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had good reports. Asked me what I did in my spare time, and advised me to read the best part of the best books and papers I could obtain, and strive constantly to improve my style. And that is the man, Still, whom I thought was cold and distant!

By the way, I wish you could be in the office for an hour and watch the business manager of the paper, and see him despatch the business.

The other day I was coming down-stairs from the editorial rooms, and I stopped amazed at the quickness with which he got rid of people and business. He had at least two hundred letters on his desk, and as fast as he opened them would run his eye down over the enclosure and apparently know the whole contents before you would judge he had read five words. Then the next one was grabbed, opened and read in the same manner. Meanwhile, he was making separate piles of them according to the respective departments for which they were intended. Then he rang for an office boy, directed him to take the bundles of letters to the different people whose duty it was to attend to them, and sent another boy to the telephone to see if a certain person

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was at his place of business. Meanwhile, one moment he was talking with some advertising agent and closing a contract with him, and the next second giving some subordinate in the office the most terrible "blowing up" I ever heard in my life. Lurid was no name for it; it was absolutely sulphurous. When it comes to using language of that description this man can beat the world. And while I was wondering if the person who was being raked over the coals was going to throw something at him, I heard him say to him in the next breath, "There, so much for business. Don't let that happen again. It raises Tophet in the office and stirs up a lot of people. Now, another thing. Some one was telling me this morning that your wife had been very ill and you were very much worried about her. Sorry for you. Here is a pass on the railroad for two. Take her away for a fortnight, get her well, and particularly get all worry off your mind. You can't do good work here when you are thinking of troubles at home. Pay will go on just the same. Most of your work is first class and we appreciate it. Never mind your thanks. I am too busy to listen to them."

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One of the force told me that afternoon that the business manager was the last man in the office to have after you if you made a mistake, and the first one all the boys went to when they were in trouble. He said to me, "He is the most cynical man I ever met in my life, and he has got the bitterest tongue, but his heart is as tender as a woman's."

Why, they tell a story about him that he had an old employee whom he was always growling at for making mistakes, and whom he was continually threatening to discharge. Finally, the old fellow died, and one day soon after his death a gray-haired old lady called at the office and inquired for the business manager. He got up from his desk and, walking over to her, said in his quick way, "What can I do for you, madam?" She replied, "I have come in to see you, sir, about Mr. Temple." "Yes," said the manager; "well, he is dead." The tears came into the woman's eyes as she replied, "Yes, sir, I know it. He was my husband. I only called to tell you how sorry he used to be because he made mistakes and bothered you so. He used to tell me about it when he came home nights, and he felt

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sorry about it. He said you stood more from him than any other man would, and were so patient with him. You see, sir, for over a year he was failing and many a day came to work when he ought to have been in bed. I thought I would come down and tell you how much he thought of you and how thankful he was that you let him stay till the last," and the manager turned away from her and looked at the wall for a moment and got his handkerchief out, and then he went over to the cashier's room and came back with a roll of bills in his hand. "There, madam," he said, "I guess your husband stood a good deal from me, too. I find in looking the books over that we had increased your husband's salary quite a while before he died, and he had never drawn the extra pay. So I will hand it to you," and he bowed her out before she could say a word. The cashier had followed him out to ascertain what the money was to be used for, and overheard the last of the manager's remarks. And in a tone of surprise he said, "Why, I didn't know Temple's pay had been raised," and the manager fairly howled at him, "Didn't know! Of course you didn't! There're lots of things you

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don't know. I think I can indulge in a lie once in a while if I pay for it and it does any good."

Have very little time to go to either the theatre or church, and therefore have very little of interest to write you, as all I have seen is what is going on in the office. Let me hear from you as often as convenient. Yours,

Ed.

P. S. How is Elinor?

"Well," remarked Still, as he folded the letter up and carefully put it behind the clock, "guess I sh'd like that manager. Me an' him would hitch hosses all right. Howsomever, that P. S. is probably all he wants answered, an' as ternight is erbout ez good er time ez eny fer me ter write er letter, guess I'll start in. Wonder what he'd say if I wrote him all I knew? 'Twont do, though. Ther boy is doin' well an' got started, an' very little now would upset the whole kittle uv fish. Don't quite like ther way things is lookin', but it may turn out all right, an' so I won't holler till I'm hurt."

And Still hunted around the house until he found his pen and ink, got some paper and pre-

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pared to write his reply, a harder task for him than he had undertaken in many a day.

Bartlett's Neck.

Dear Ed:—

I got your letter and as today is a day of rest, being Sunday, guess I'll answer you, though when you come to think of it, writing letters ain't no rest for me, but the hardest kind of work.

Have just got home from the village. Went to meeting and heard one of Mister Small's regerlation sermons on the Almighty. Funny what idees some men hev of their heavenly father. If my own father hed been half as ugly as Elder Small made God out to be, I'd hev left home as soon as I could hev crawled off the place. How anybody on earth can be a Christian and then feel as the Elder does, gets me. Why, his whole sermon was all about God's anger and wrath and how the wicked was going to be punished. 'Twas enuff to make a dog quit his vittles, and there sat a whole parcel of little children drinking that stuff in and scared blue. Now I don't believe in that sort of thing. Why not tell 'em about His

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love for us, and how He pities us and knows what weak critters we are, and that when we go wrong He feels worse than we do. And like a father to us, He may think that we ought to hev a good trouncing, but at the same time rather hurt Himself than us.

I see Elinor at church. She seemed to be bearing up fairly well considering the weather and the sermon. You can't never tell what's running through a woman's mind, so I couldn't say how much she misses you. Jest as soon guess where lightening is going to strike next as guess what a woman will do. They're liable to take jest the one they want ruther than the one folks pick out for 'em.

Coming out of church I hauled alongside of her and just dropped a hint that I'd heard from you again, and she got kind of red, and said she was glad to know you was gitting on and hoped you would get settled soon. Said she was very much interested in you, being as you and her were old friends. I didn't let on how much I knew. I guess you can depend on her as much as any of them, as she comes of good stock.

We are having quite a spell of weather now

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and things are looking all right. Keep pointed right up into the wind and you'll fetch all right. No more now. From

Stillman Gott.

When he had finished the letter he slowly read it over and said: "I allers supposed till lately that ther truth should be spoke at all times, an' I don't intend ter begin lyin' now, but I've made up my mind ter keep some uv ther truth ter myself. Ed's too high strung ter git ther whole thing in one dose. 'Twould be too much fer him. Ther few hints I've give him in that letter won't stir him up much, ez I've only kinder hinted erbout women in general an' hain't said nothin' perticular erbout Elinor Day. Seems ter me that when I wrote that yer can't tell any one minit what er woman'll do in ther next, that I've hit ther nail on ther head; an' when I've said that er woman always picks out ther man she wants an' not ther one ther rest uv ther folks pick out fer her, that I'm kinder hintin' 'round, so's he'll be kinder prepared fer what's goin' ter happen, unless I miss my guess. I never see ther wind change any faster than er woman can

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when she makes up her mind ter do it. They're ez much different frum men ez chalk is diff'rent frum cheese. Men are natchrully bad, but women are queer. I've been studyin' 'em ever since I wuz er boy, an' I don't understand 'em yet. Wish I wuz out uv it, but I ain't, an' I guess I'll hev ter see it through some way. I'm erbout ez fit ter be mixed up in er love affair ez I'd be ter play er pianner, an' I don't know nothin' erbout music. I read somewheres in er paper that ther fellers what Uncle Sam sends ercross ther water ter act fer ther United States hez ter be mighty slick liars ter hold our end up with them forrin fellers, an' ef that's so, I better stick ter farmin' an' fishin'. I don't say but what I'd do fairly well on er hoss trade, er ther size uv ther fish what I ketch, but when it comes ter writin' letters erbout love affairs, seems ter me ez though I wuz er leetle mite weak."

CHAPTER SEVEN

Mrs. Day was a woman who was looked up to by all the people in Bartlett, and as Still had often remarked, "She wuz er leetle mite ther best woman that ever broke bread." If sickness or sorrow came into any household, Sarah Day was always the first ministering angel to come into that home and do all in her power to assist the suffering or wipe away the tears of grief. And yet there were many other women in the town who were equally tender-hearted, equally willing to do good. But as soon as Sarah Day arrived on the scene of action, any other woman who might be present retreated and became merely an assistant, for Sarah was born to command. She managed all the church sociables and "ran" all the funerals in her immediate vicinity. She picked out the hymns to be sung, arranged the order of the funeral procession, and gener-

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ally after the rest of the mourning friends had departed for the cemetery, remained at the house in order to "get things to rights," as she called it. It was not because she enjoyed funerals or sickness, but she would rather do all the work herself or at least superintend it, than sit still or be a subordinate. And then again it was a change from the humdrum routine of housework on a farm, a mild form of dissipation. Monday, washing; Tuesday, ironing; Wednesday, mending and any extra work; Thursday, whatever had been left over from the rest of the week; Friday, sweeping, and Saturday, baking, and in between feeding the chickens, skimming the milk and making the butter.

Round and round, round and round, day in, day out, week in, week out, year after year went the tread mill from the time she and Stephen Day had walked through the door of her present home. Sunday was a little different; after she had got breakfast, washed and dressed the children, cleared up the dining-room and kitchen and put away the dishes, she climbed into the carryall and went to church and listened to the choir sing,

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“As pants the wearied hart for cooling springs,
That sinks exhausted in the summer’s chase,”

and she longed for one cooling spring in her life;
and when they sang,

“When the weary, seeking rest,
To thy Goodness flee;
When the heavy-laden cast
All their load on Thee;”

she would wonder if before she died there would be just a brief moment, a mere breathing spell, when she could sit down with nothing to do but fold her hands and rest, rest, rest. As fast as each of her other daughters had arrived at an age where they could help her in her work, some young man had persuaded her to forsake home and cleave unto him, and out of the whole flock only one was left. She had seen the others begin where she had begun, she saw no future for them other than her past, and she resolved that at least this last one, the youngest, and because she was the last, in that respect the dearest, should have an easier time of life, should have a few flowers growing beside her path. If her good husband had known how she felt about life,

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he would have gasped for breath from surprise. Why, she had a good home, plenty to eat and he had never been stingy with her. Of course she had her work to do, but then he had his. He did not realize that he went to the village once in a while, attended town meeting once a year and his lodge once a month, while she was simply an animated machine. She loved her husband and she knew that he loved her, although her belief in his love was founded on the memory of years ago when they were young rather than upon outward signs from day to day. Stephen had "quit all that foolishness," as he would have termed it, years ago. There were no storms in her life, but what was even worse, there was no sunshine. Nothing but the cloudy day and the black night.

She determined that Elinor should not marry a farmer nor any other man who simply earned a good living. "Of course," she argued with herself, "one could love such a man, but would it not be as easy to love some other who had more money? You might not think as much of him at first, but if he gave you a good home, and simply let you once in a while peep out into the world,

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you would grow to love him; and if he lived in some city, if he had the means not only to let you see the world, but be a part of it, how could you help loving a man who thus gave you a foretaste of Heaven?"

She had never told her thoughts to her daughter, she had not deemed it necessary. She would wait until danger came nigh, until some suitor appeared, and then it would be time enough to speak. As for Edward Locke, it never occurred to her that he was or could be in love with Elinor. Why, they were simply good friends, and those who were friends from childhood would only remain friends. But on the night that Edward last called at the house, her eyes had been opened. Her husband generally retired for the night when she did, and after getting into bed, opened not his mouth unless it might possibly be to disturb her slumbers with snores like unto the voice of the bull of Bashan. And when that night, instead of immediately proceeding to go to sleep, he began by saying, "Sarah, I want ter talk ter yer er minute before we go ter sleep," she knew that something of great importance had either happened or was

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about to occur, and every sense within her was awake the next second and on the alert.

"Why, Stephen," she said, "what on earth has happened?"

"Well, nothin' hez happened an' then ergain there hez," was the reply.

"For the land's sake, Stephen, don't go beatin' 'round ther bush that way. What's ther matter? Lost any money, er what?"

"No, I ain't lost nothin' ner likely to, 'cept ther sleep I'm losin' now, but I hed er talk with Ed Locke ternight. He's been settin' up with Elinor more or less an' I thought I'd bring things to er head."

"Good Lord, Stephen," exclaimed Mrs. Day, "you hain't been an' put yer finger in that pie, hev yer? What on earth did yer do er say?"

"Well, now, Sarah, don't go gittin' yer dander up; keep quiet an' listen, an' I'll tell yer jist what happened. I told him that in my opinion he wuz er condemned fool ter be er thinkin' erbout goin' up ter ther Westward fer work, when he hed er good farm that some day would be his. But he declared he wuz er goin', an' finally, ter make er long story short, I told him he could

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either stop on ther farm er else he needn't come here any more till he wuz earin' ernuff ter support er wife. He talked er lot, an' Elinor, she cried an' took on some, but I held right to it, an' told him that he could quit fer er while, an' what's more, I told 'em they couldn't write to each other neither. So that ends that fer er while unless I miss my guess."

"Well, Stephen, all I've got ter say is that you've done well ez fur ez you've gone. I'm plain ter say that ther more er man mixes in er mess uv that sort gen'rally ther wuss he makes it. But yer ort ter hev gone further. Yer ort ter hev told him that he couldn't never hev her."

"Why, Sarah," replied the surprised husband, "seems ter me that's goin' quite er ways. While I think he's er dumb fool ter be goin' erway, still, uv course, he may strike it all right, and p'raps some time be earnin' ez much ez er thousand dollars er year. But it's takin' er big chanet. He can stay home on ther farm an' some fine day he'll hev it. Josiah Locke owns that farm free and clear, an' he's got good buildin's, an' it's well stocked. Shouldn't be surprised ef Josiah hed some money in ther bank. He goes

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up ter Ellsworth erbout ev'ry year, an' ez fur ez I can find out nobuddy knows what he goes fer. Bill Bowden asked him oncet what took him up there, an' he grinned an' sed his hoss, an' Bill shet up. But ain't yer goin' er leetle fer when yer say he can't hev her noways?"

"No, I ain't, not one mite too fer," said Mrs. Day, as she sat up in bed. "Now, listen ter ev'ry word I say. I wouldn't let Elinor hev ther best man in Bartlett, not even George Stover, an' his father keeps ther best store in the village and owns shares in three or four vessels. She's goin' ter marry some one what can take her right away frum Bartlett an' off'n er farm, an' let her live in er city ef 'taint bigger'n Ellsworth. She's ther only one we've got left, an' all ther other girls hev married hard work erlong with their husbands, an' she aint er goin' ter, ef I hev my say. Now, I've spoke my mind, an' let that end it. I'll take Elinor in hand, an' ef she thinks she can hev her own way an' make er mistake uv er life, she'll find she's met her come uppance when she talks with me."

"Now, don't be ha'sh with her, Sarah," pleaded the husband.

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"Land sakes, Stephen, anyone who'd hear you talk would think I wuz mad with Elinor. Fact is young girls is er parcel uv fools an' don't know what they do want. Fust feller what comes along an' sort uv shines up to 'em, they'll grab without stoppin' ter think it's er life bargain. Now, you jest 'tend t' yer own affairs an' I'll 'tend ter this one." And Stephen, realizing that no matter what his views might be Sarah Day would have her own way, turned over, and soon after the good man slept, while the ambitious woman lay awake far into the night planning out her campaign.

For days after that night, memorable to Stephen Day for the reason that it was the first time in his married life that his wife had ever pushed him into the background, the good woman took every occasion that presented itself to picture the many horrors and the few pleasures of married life, if one was not extremely careful in the selection of a mate. To all these arguments Elinor had listened respectfully, although they did not wholly coincide with her romantic ideas as gathered from the many short stories and the few books that she had read. But

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when one day her mother in that morning's dissertation particularized and got down to Edward and Elinor, the daughter plucked up her courage and began to remonstrate.

"But, mother," she said, "I couldn't marry a man I didn't love, and if I did love him, money or the lack of it would make no difference."

"Now, Elinor," said Mrs. Day, "don't be er natchrul born fool. There's er sayin' that when poverty comes in ther door, love flies out uv ther winder, an' I think it's wuss'n that. In my opinion ez soon ez poverty is seen er comin' up ther road, love begins ter pack up. I don't say that ef yer wuz head over heels in love with Ed Locke that I'd say you shouldn't marry him. You know I wouldn't want ter cause yer any sorrer er break yer heart; but you don't love him yet, judgin' frum what yer hev told me, an' ef yer know which side yer bread's buttered on, yer won't neither. Keep on bein' friends with him, but don't go any farther. 'Mister Right' will come along some fine day, an' then you can go ter lovin' him ez soon ez yer hev er mind ter. But before you go ter thinkin' much uv him, jest look eround er little an' find out what he does

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fer er livin', an' whether he's likely ter be er good provider."

And thus she instilled into her daughter's mind the advantages of looking upon love and marriage as a business matter rather than an emotion that one can neither create nor control.

If Elinor had been in love with Edward, all these arguments would have fallen upon deaf ears. But while she did not agree with her mother, yet she listened and remembered all that was said to her, and determined to wait until she was obliged to decide the question for herself.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Among the early arrivals at the small hotel in the village of Bartlett that summer was Henry Davenport. He had lived in the city of New York ever since his birth, and had had all the advantages that money and social position could give him.

Graduating from college, he had studied law at odd intervals and worked enough hours each week over his books to convince himself that he was a diligent student, although in the opinion of every other person connected with the office in which he daily hung up his hat he was the veriest loafer.

To one who appreciates the vast amount of study required to obtain even the slightest knowledge of the fundamental principles of law, to a person realizing that the study of law by one who desires to make it his profession never

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ceases, the work done by Henry Davenport would have appeared like that of a person wading into the water up to his ankles and thinking he had begun crossing the ocean.

Naturally bright and far from lazy, the knowledge that some day he would inherit a part of the vast fortune snatched by his father out of Wall street kept him from close application to anything except the enjoyment of all the good things around him.

He studied law only when he could think of nothing else to do, and, being a student in the office of his father's attorney, that circumstance kept him from knowing any of the unfavorable comments made in regard to the hours that he wasted, even when he deigned to visit the office at all. Having taken up the study of law because it was the duty of every man to have some occupation, and not because he loved it or was even attracted by it, he made himself believe when the warm days of summer arrived that he was mentally exhausted and needed rest. He had come to Bartlett, not because he sought a place of repose, but because the fishing and boating were of the best and the hotel first-class.

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While driving on one occasion along the country road that went by the farm of Stephen Day, he had stopped at the house for a glass of water. Elinor had handed it to him, and he had been attracted by her sweet face, the mass of golden hair that surmounted it, and the innocence of her manner that was so much in her favor when compared with the ways of the young women whom he was accustomed to meet in New York.

He had previously been so much engrossed in seeking enjoyment in other ways that, while he had met many women whom he had enjoyed talking and dancing with, each in turn had passed out of mind as she had passed out of his sight. But this girl was different. She attracted him in some manner that he could not describe, and he determined to know her, and to know her well. A little skilful engineering on his part brought about an introduction, and from that moment Henry Davenport was constantly in attendance upon Elinor.

At first she looked upon the acquaintance as similar to many others made under the same circumstances, made in the summer, to be forgotten in the autumn. But, as his attentions became

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more marked, as he showed by his manner that he was attracted by her, she was at first flattered, and then attracted to him.

One afternoon they were sitting on the rocks down on the shore of the bay at the foot of her father's farm, when suddenly Davenport began speaking of himself and his home in New York. He told her of the aimless life he had led, and, while claiming that he had never committed any act that had in any way injured the good name of his parents, admitted that he had never had any purpose in life other than seeking his own amusement.

"And now," he concluded, "for the first time I have an object in life, something to make me want to bring out all that is best in me. And you, Elinor, are the person who has brought about this great change. It is my love for you that has made me a different man. I have never seen a woman before that I cared for, but I know that I love you, and if you care enough for me to become my wife you will make me very happy. Perhaps I should have spoken to your father and obtained his consent first, but I could not wait for that, I could not resist the temptation to tell

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you how much you are to me, how much I love you. Elinor, will you be my wife?"

"Oh, why should you have asked me such a question?" said Elinor. "Certainly you have known me but a very short time, and you can't know anything in regard to me. It seems unreasonable to me for you to want a person to be your wife whom you practically know nothing about. You know nothing of my people, and you know nothing about my ways; and, on the other hand, I know nothing about your people, and nothing about you except as you have told me, and therefore I am equally ignorant in regard to you. It would be different if we had known each other a long while; but once promised to you, or once married to you, then there is no going back, even though we find that we have made the worst possible mistake we could have made. You may have a disposition utterly unsuited to mine; it might prove when it was too late to correct the mistake that either could have been happy with some one else, but that we never could be happy with each other. It doesn't seem to me we have known each other long enough. I will be perfectly frank with you; I have been at-

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tracted toward you, but I don't love you, and therefore, if you insist upon my giving you my final answer today, I shall be obliged to say no."

And then the young man, greatly surprised at being refused anything that he wanted, for certainly during his brief and uneventful career it had never happened before, pleaded with the girl not to give him her final answer then, but at least to think it over, and he would call at her home for his answer later, or, perhaps what would be less embarrassing for them both, they could meet at the same place where they went almost daily, and he would keep silent until she was ready to give him an answer which he agreed he would accept as final. And then dropping the subject which was uppermost in his mind, for he was bright enough to see that it would be worse than useless to press the question any further, he began to talk of other matters, and for an hour pictured to her the delights of a life in New York city, where life, from his standpoint and as he had seen it, was one roundelay of pleasure and enjoyment.

They walked through the field to the door of her home, he still picturing life in the great city.

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As she entered the house, Mrs. Day met her and taking her by the arm walked into the front room. It was very apparent that the ambitious mother had seen them coming and was anxious to learn what they had been talking about, but before she could ask the question Elinor burst into tears, and sobbed as though her heart would break. The surprised mother led her gently over to the sofa, and placing her daughter's head upon her shoulder, patted and comforted her until the tears had ceased, and then her curiosity got the better of her, and she asked:

"Now, Elinor, what on earth's ther matter with yer?"

"Oh, mother," replied the girl, "why is it that I can't have a friend without his making love to me?"

"Do you mean ter tell me," asked the astonished mother, "that that New York feller hez been makin' love ter you?"

"Yes, he has, and I wish he had done nothing of the kind. I don't know him, and I know nothing about him except what I have seen of him since he came to the village this summer. He appears very nice, pleasant, and gentlemanly, but

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I do not know what he is, or who he is, other than what he tells me. As if I wanted to be more miserable than I am, he has asked me to marry him, and I don't know what to do."

"Elinor Day," replied Mrs. Day, "ef you hed 'n ounce uv brains you would know what ter do without askin' me. I tell yer, you hev him an' hev him quick, too. Since he hez been hangin' 'round yer, an' I sh'd judge he hed been ever since he first met yer, I wrote yer uncle Samuel down in New York City an' asked him ter find out what he could erbout this young feller's family, an' I got er letter terday, after yer'd left the house, sayin' that his father was wuth millions, and that ther son would hev all ther money when his father died. Samuel sed that ez fur ez he hed learned ther son didn't amount ter very much ez fur ez business was concerned, but he guessed he wuz er harmless, good-natured sort uv er feller who never done nobuddy no harm. Now ef his father hez one-hundredth part uv ther money that they say he hez, you'll never hev ter do nothin' all day long but set 'round an' be er lady an' ride in yer own carriage, an' you won't hev any work ter do ez long ez yer live."

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“But I don’t want to marry him because he has got money,” pleaded the girl, “and I don’t know whether I love him or not. All I know is that I have met him a number of times, he has treated me pleasantly and been a gentleman; other than that I don’t know. How can I say I will marry him? How can I say I will be a wife to a man, who, for aught I know, will make me perfectly miserable, and I make him unhappy?”

“Now, look here, Elinor,” said the mother, “you set right up an’ look at me, an’ listen ter what I’m goin’ ter say ter yer, an’ remember it ter yer dyin’ day. You’ve been readin’ those flummerdiddle stories about love an’ all that sort uv thing until you’ve got ther idee in yer head that some great thing hez got ter happen to yer. Now, ef you wuz thinkin’ uv anybuddy else but yerself, you would see yer duty by yer father an’ mother, an’ marry this feller. We don’t owe no-buddy ner nothin’, but at the same time, when yer father gets so old he can’t work, what do yer suppose is goin’ ter become uv us? Ef we hev ter hire er man it will simply mean we shall run in debt. Then ther place ’ll be mortgaged, and ther next thing you know we’ll lose ther farm; then

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there aint nothin' but ther poorhouse starin' us in ther face. Nice thing, aint it, ter happen ter yer father an' me jest because yer won't act like er sensible girl an' do ez I want yer to? An' what do yer think would become uv you, for yer couldn't earn yer own livin'—much ez ever any-buddy can earn their livin' nowadays.

“Ez fer yer brothers an' sisters, they hev got their han's full now without any more dependin' on 'em. I suppose uv course some one of 'em would take yer father in, an' some other one would take me in, and you could go an' live with the third an' help keep house. Now, this aint what I've looked forward to, an' it ain't treatin' us decent when we hev done so much fer you. Ef yer marry this feller an' ef anythin' should happen ter us, he could always go inter his pocket an' help us, an' he wouldn't feel it more then er flea bite. It seems ter me that yer owe yer father an' mother somethin' ef yer don't care nothin' erbout yerself. Ef yer only knew it, you're ther luckiest girl that ever lived in Bartlett, an' ther chance you've got is ther chance uv er lifetime. There aint another girl in this town but what would jump at that feller so quick that it would

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make his head swim.

“Uv course you can do ez yer please, but there aint no reason in ther Lord’s world why yer can’t be happy with this young man. I hev seen more of the world than you hev, an’ I hev jest made up my mind that yer can be happy with a man who has got plenty uv money an’ can give yer er good home, even ef yer don’t care so much fer him ez yer do fer er man what aint got nothin’, an’ is always tellin’ yer how much he thinks uv yer. You’ll find, as plenty uv other people hev found, that ez soon ez ther new wears off that it is jest er question uv dollars an’ cents who yer hev, ez long ez he’s decent. It won’t do yer no good ter go an’ talk with yer father about this matter, because me an’ him hev talked about it an’ I’m runnin’ ther whole thing. He hez got some of ther highfalutin notions that you hev, but I can’t see that they hev done him any good. Ther other girls an’ boys got married, an’ I sed nothin’ but jest let them hev their own way, an’ while they haint sed nothin’ about it, I hev’n’t any doubt but what they are doin’ jest the same ez more than half the people in this world who are married are doin’—wishin’ their cake wuz dough.

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“Uv course no matter what yer do, it won’t make no difference ter yer father an’ me, in one sense. There aint goin’ ter be no threat’nin’ ner nothin’ uv ther kind. You will hev er home jest the same ez ever, but ef yer cared er snap uv yer fingers for us, an’ if yer wanted ter pay back ther things we hev done fer you, now’s yer chance. Now, jest think it over, an’ be er sensible girl an’ not act like er fool, ez most girls do ’bout such things. There, I hev spoke my mind, an’ I aint goin’ ter say no more t’ yer, but I consider my judgment is er good deal better than yours,” and then having talked longer and plainer with her daughter than she had ever done before in her life, Mrs. Day returned to the kitchen and went about performing her household duties with a heightened color and a briskness of movement which portended calamity to anyone crossing her path while she remained in her present state of mind.

The mother unconsciously had pierced the only weak point in the girl’s armor. If Elinor had consulted only her own wishes she would have told Davenport that she never could marry him, and if he had pressed her for a reason, her an-

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swer would have been that while she did not care enough for any man whom she knew to say she loved him, yet there was at least one person for whom she had a greater admiration and affection, and who stood nearer and dearer to her than any one else, and that for that reason, if for no other, there would be no use in his ever dreaming that she could learn to care enough for him to be his wife. But she had realized for some time that her father and mother were getting old; they were slowly but surely going down the hill of life, and each year brought additional cares and less strength and less vigor to endure them. Her brothers, as her mother had said, were earning "a good living," and having all settled in one section of the country, and all the sons being farmers or fishermen, and the daughters having married men who followed one or the other of the same callings, they could offer at the most a home for either of their parents if the necessity should ever arise; and the parents accepting the offer would have realized, as well as themselves, that an additional burden had been placed upon shoulders which were then carrying all they could support. It would have been impossible for the

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girl with her natural sincerity and honesty to have accepted Davenport if she had really loved Edward, but feeling that she did not, and with the great feeling of love which she had for her parents, and being to a certain extent convinced by her mother's specious argument, that night before she went to sleep she decided that she would accept him, and trust that her mother's prophecy of learning to love after marriage was a correct one.

CHAPTER NINE

And so the day came when again seated on the rocks looking out over the sea, she turned to him and said:

“I have decided to give you your answer today. I am going to be perfectly honest with you, and if, after I have finished, you wish to retract what you have already said, believe me when I say that it will hurt neither my feelings nor my pride. I do not love you, as I have told you before, and I do not know as I ever can, but I presume there are many men and women in the world who do not love one another, either because they are not capable of any such feelings, or because the one to whom they are mated has never inspired it. I am willing to be your wife on that understanding and that understanding alone. You must take the risk that I may never love you, but I can certainly assure you that I

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will be true to you and will be as good a wife to you as I have tried to be a daughter to my parents, and I accept your offer more for their sake than for my own.

“My father and mother are getting old, and the day is not far distant when neither of them will be able to work as they have done since they were young, when some one of their family must take them and care for them, make their last days pleasant and easy for them. I am the one to whom they look at the present time for that future aid. I will marry you upon your solemn promise that you will be as good to them as I know you intend to be to me, and I ask you still more.

“If the time should ever come when it is a question whether you are to be good and kind to them or to me, then first think of them and put me one side. I am young and shall be able to bear sorrow or disappointment better than they. Their life, up to the present time, has been one constant striving to make both ends meet, seeing each day begin as the previous one has ended, and no hope of anything better than an honest life and the power to pay their debts; if the time

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should ever come when that ability was taken away from them and they found themselves obliged to ask those whom they owe to wait; if the time should ever come when they knew not whence the next dollar was coming, then I ask you to help and assist them as you would want your own father and mother to be assisted if they were in the same position, and I ask you to do it for them with the same kindly spirit that I believe you would do it for your own parents, knowing that I would be more grateful to you for what you did for them than for anything which you could possibly do for me. And if ever I should learn to love you it will be more because you loved them than because you loved me. You see I am not giving you much; really, I am giving you nothing in return for all that you are offering to me, but if you wish to take me as I am and as I feel towards you, and if you wish to take the great risk which exists at the present time, trusting to the future to possibly make me care for you, then I am willing to marry you, and my answer is yes."

And he, knowing that the mere matter of dollars and cents would make no difference to him,

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realizing that if the time should come when he would be obliged to assist her parents, that the few paltry dollars which might relieve their distress or anxiety would never be noticed by him more than the fall of a single drop of water on a desert of sand, gladly accepted the little which she offered, and told her that she had made him very happy, and that he would give her anything which she asked for, and more too; that when they were married and had a home of their own he would be only too glad to have her parents give up their farm and come to live with them, if it would make them or her one whit happier.

They walked home through the fields, he filled with a certain new dignity and superiority that he did not understand, and she wondering if in doing her duty by her parents she would be happy even though she was not in love with him.

When they arrived at the house, she invited him in with a certain air of sweet proprietorship, and he accepted the invitation with an alacrity common to men in his frame of mind.

While he sat in the "front room" and read the names and dates of death of the Day family who had departed from this vale of tears, as told by

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the silver plates surrounded by wax wreaths in elaborate black walnut frames suspended on the wall, examined all the treasures arranged on the "what-not," and shuddered over the "chamber of horrors," perpetrated by the village photographer and gathered together in the family album, Elinor was "setting the table" in the dining room, and Mr. Day was being pushed into his Sunday clothes by the pleased mother for presentation to the future son-in-law.

Most young men under ordinary circumstances would have looked forward to the introduction with more or less embarrassment, and probably Davenport at other times would have been affected in a like manner, but he was in love, or at least he thought he was, and that form of insanity knows no fear.

The door opened, and the family entered; Elinor blushing and smiling, "mother" flushed with the excitement arising from such an event, and the labor of getting her husband into a presentable condition, and "father" suffering from the horrors of a white shirt, a new paper collar and tie, and, like a lamb led to the slaughter, opening not his mouth.

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Elinor introduced her lover to her mother and father, and sat down. "The meeting was open." For a few moments not a word was spoken, and the buzzing of the few flies imprisoned between the green paper curtains and the windows sounded to Davenport louder than the roar of a boiler factory full of orders and behind time.

It was necessary for him to speak, however, and in a few modest words he told Elinor's father and mother of the great event that had occurred that memorable afternoon, explained to them who he was, the financial standing of his father, and concluded by respectfully asking their consent to the marriage of their daughter and himself.

Mrs. Day had nodded a pleased acquiescence as the young man had spoken of the wealth and standing of his parents, and, as he concluded, turned to her husband with a look that told him what to say in reply. The honest old man took another look at his wife in order to be certain he was not about to make a mistake, and, being assured by the second encouraging nod, replied that he "guessed if Elinor and her mother had no objections, he had none. Young people gen-

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erally had their way about such things, and, as the young man had told them all about himself, he supposed it was all right."

And then Mrs. Day said supper was ready, and the party filed out to the dining room and proceeded to enjoy the meal according to their respective frames of mind. Mrs. Day was occupied in seeing that Davenport had a bit of everything, in order that he might realize what a famous cook she was, and Mr. Day, having had the disease and being immune, simply munched his food as usual.

The following Sunday Davenport attended the village church with Elinor, sat in the family pew, held the same hymn book, and returned to the farm of Mr. Day for dinner. Consequently, the engagement was as formally announced as though it had been published in the county paper.

For when in the history of Bartlett had a young man ever gone to church and sat in the same pew with a girl unless he was "setting up" with her? And once started to such an extent, never in the whole romantic history of Bartlett had there ever been a turning back in the course of love.

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There may have been in the mind of Elinor Day a thought of Edward, the question of how he would feel, of his sorrow and unhappiness when he heard the news, but she argued herself into believing that she owed a greater duty to her parents than she did to him or even to herself, and that even if she was making a mistake it was better that she should be unhappy in her future life rather than the good father and mother who had done so much for her.

She made herself believe that if she had married Edward she would have made him unhappy, and that, therefore, she had been very wise in giving him up and choosing another, and very unselfish in what she had done.

Most of the things that we believe to be acts of unselfishness are really done to please ourselves. And while they may involve some sacrifice, in the majority of cases the pleasure we obtain is greater than we would have received if we had done otherwise. And knowing and realizing that fact in advance, as we always do, unselfishness in most cases is a lost virtue, if it ever existed.

CHAPTER TEN

"Ignorance is bliss," and so Edward was happy in his new employment, and in the thought that every day brought him nearer to the time when he could return to Bartlett and inform Mr. Day that he was able to give his daughter a suitable home.

He had shown a natural ability for newspaper work, and a willingness to use all possible effort to improve any chance offered him by his superiors. The articles written by him for the paper had already attracted the notice of the editor, and on one occasion the great man had unbent enough to say to him, "Mr. Locke, I notice when you write a 'story' for the paper, you write a story, and not a mere cold statement of fact. Good plan. A story is a story and an editorial is an editorial. The city editor reports to me that he is pleased with your work. I trust you will keep on. There are a good many rungs in

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the ladder of fame, but they are not very far apart. Keep climbing."

All this was very pleasant and encouraging, but he could not quite understand the letters of Still. They told him all the weekly news of Bartlett, and told it in such a bright, cheery way that each letter was like an oasis in a desert. And yet the stretches of hot, dreary sand to be travelled over between the cool green spots were very long and very hard for this young lover.

Still always mentioned Elinor in his letters; stated that "she was well, and seemed to be enjoying herself," and yet there was never any little message that showed that Still ever talked with her, even spoke of him to her. He felt that he must go to Bartlett, see her if only for a day, and have her tell him that she was still waiting for him, still faithful to him. Finally when he could endure the suspense no longer, he applied for a week's vacation, and, the favor being granted, started for Bartlett that very evening.

As the steamer came up to the wharf at Hardwick the next morning he saw Still standing near the small freight house talking with the stage

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driver. The moment the gang plank was pushed from the steamer to the wharf Edward leaped ashore and had Still by the hand.

“Saints an’ sinners!” ejaculated Still. “Ef this ain’t er sight fer sore eyes. Well! well! well! I declare, Ed, ef I’d known you were comin’, I dunno but what I’d hed ther village band out. Now jest give yer trunk check ter Horace an’ he’ll take yer trunk over on ther stage, but you’ll ride with me. I come over to ther village fer er few things, an’ jest thought I’d come down an’ see ther boat come in. Never dreamed uv seein’ you. Kinder funny, wuzn’t it? Generally go up ter Bartlett village ter git my stores, but somehow terday, thinks I, I guess I’ll go over ter Hardwick. Don’t pay ter give all yer trade ter one store, yer know. Apt ter make ther store-keeper kind uv purse proud, yer know,” he added, with a twinkle in his eye. “Git right in an’ we’ll start erlong. Hain’t got so much style ez Horace’s stage an’ mebbe we’ll be er little slower, but that’ll give us more time ter talk things over. We’ll let ther stage start fust, an’ we’ll jog along behind.”

As soon as Edward had seen his trunk placed

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on the back of the stage, and had given the driver instructions to deliver it at his father's house and inform his parents that he would be at home shortly, he took a seat beside Still in his old buggy, and the old mare began to trot at a peddler's gait toward home.

There was no opportunity to ask Still any questions in regard to the matter that was of so much importance to him until they had got beyond the village, for every one they met either had a word to pass with Still, or was so pleased and surprised to see Edward that it would have been a crime to have passed them without giving some explanation of the unexpected visit, and informing each one how he was "getting along in Boston," and whether or not he "enjoyed living in the city."

As they climbed the long hill leading into Hale's woods, the old mare slowed down into a walk, and Edward had an opportunity to ask the question that had been on his mind and lips ever since he had left Boston.

"How's Elinor, Still?" he asked.

"Seems ter be all right, ez fer ez I kin see; eatin' her three meals er day regular, an' ez

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happy ez er clam at high water," was the reply.

"But, Still, what does she say when you see her? I realize that you don't see her every day, and that, of course, you can't go out of your way to call at the house, but you naturally see her every Sunday anyway, and probably oftener. Don't you talk with her when you see her? Don't you or she mention my name? Doesn't she ever speak of me to you? You have never written in any of your letters a word she has said to you about me, or given me any reason to think you ever see her. Now, tell me all about it," demanded the impatient lover.

"Now, you hold yer hosses, Ed, and ez we go through the woods I'll tell yer the whole thing. Don't ask no more questions till I get through talkin', an' you'll git ther whole story. Let me tell it my own way, an' you'll know all yer want ter. To start with, Elinor Day is ez likely er girl ez I know in ther whole town uv Bartlett, but owin' ter the fact that other people hev got married besides her father and mother, she ain't ther only young woman in ther world any more'n you an' me are the only men that's livin'. There ain't no doubt 'n my mind but what she meant

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what she sed when she told yer she'd wait fer yer when you went up to ther westward. I remember when I went ter school years ago that we hed er copy book ter learn ter write frum, an' one uv ther things in it wuz, 'Absence makes ther heart grow fonder.' In my opinion, ther feller that got up 'nother sayin' 'n ther same book hed er good deal more hoss sense, an' he sed, 'Out uv sight, out uv mind.' Ther fust feller hed er rifle an' hit somethin' once in er while, but t'other feller hed er large-bore shotgun, an' when he let go, he brought 'em down in flocks. Ed, y're one uv ther best boys that ever grew up in this town, an' yer won't take ter drink er cut yer throat at what I'm goin' ter tell yer; but if I can see through er board when ther knot is drove out, yer might ez well reel up yer line an' go ershore; fer Elinor Day is settin' up with er feller frum New York who's down here fer th' summer. There, that's off my mind. I'd rather hev taken er lickin' than told yer, but what wuz ther use uv lyin'? You'd hev found out ef I hadn't told yer, an' I guess you'd ruther I told yer than anybody else."

The old mare jogged along over the quiet

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road, and for a few moments the only sounds that broke the silence were the songs of the birds and the dry, dusty whirr of the locusts. The road had turned out of the woods into the open country, and the bay lay before them, with Sheep Island in the distance. As Still turned to look at Edward, he saw that his young friend was gazing out over the water, and he wisely said nothing.

"Still," said Edward, suddenly turning around, "I can't thank you for what you have said; no one feels thankful for bad news, but it had to be told to me, and I am glad you were the one to tell it. No other person in the world would have known as well as you how I would feel; no other person would have tried so hard to break it to me so gently, and felt so badly in doing it. Now, there is only one more favor you can do me. Turn round and drive me back to Hardwick. I will stay at the hotel there over night, and in the morning take the steamer back to Boston. There is nothing to keep me here now."

"There," said Still, "that's jest like er feller in love. Cur'us how hoggish er feller gits when he's taken that way. Don't think uv nobuddy

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but himself. Hez an idee that ef he's miserable that settles ther whole thing. Jest stop an' think er minit, Ed, before yer decide to up anchor an' clear out. There's er good man over on Bartlett Neck that yer call father, who'll be glad ter see yer, an', though he's growlin' all ther time because yer don't like farmin', right down in his heart he's proud uv yer spunk in startin' fer yerself. He wouldn't tell yer fer ther world, an' he'd say 'twasn't so ef yer asked him; but I've summered an' wintered him since we wuz boys, an' know him root and branch, an' er better father never broke bread. He's like er big oak, rough bark, an' kind uv twisted some by ther winds that's blowed hard where it growed, but it's er good big stick, without 'er rotten spot in it.

"An' there's er woman over there on ther farm, one uv ther best in ther town uv Bartlett, who, erbout twenty-five years ago, went down ter death's door, so near to it that she could look through an' see ther golden streets an' hear ther angels singin'. It wuz er beautiful place, an' she wuz tired an' wanted ter rest. She wuz jest steppin' through, ready ter set down with

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nuthin' ter do after that but praise ther Lord, when 'way behind her she heard er little baby's voice, an' she turned back—back ter hard work, back ter trouble an' sorrer, back to that baby. Ain't she wuth goin' ter see? Do yer know uv any girl that'll do that fer yer?"

The tender chord had been touched, and the tears ran down the young man's face. "I'm a fool to give way like this, Still," he said, "but I could not help it. I have been looking forward so long to the day when I would see her and hear her voice, that when you told me that I had lost her forever, it did not seem to me as though I wanted to see any one again but strangers. But I know now I was wrong and selfish. I will be a man and act like one."

"That's ther talk," said Still, smilingly, "now y're gettin' yer senses ergain. An' now that yer've quieted down an' there ain't no signs uv yer breakin' out ergain, I'm goin' ter tell yer something that yer won't believe now, but yer will when yer get older. There's jest ez big fish in ther sea ez ever wuz caught, an' I've noticed that generally they go in schools, at that. Folks is something like fish, anyway. There's

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ther kind that ain't no earthly use; what they wuz made for heaven only knows, an' you and I can't find out. Them's sculpins. In my opinion ther Almighty wuz jokin' when he made 'em.

"Then there's another kind that hangs eround ther shore, an' they're good ernuff ter feed to ther hens, an' sometimes ter eat when vittles run kind uv short. Them's cunners and flounders. Then there's ther kind yer ketch way out in deep water, heavy an' logy, but lots uv livin' in 'em. Good, substantial stuff. Them's codfish. But ther best kind uv all is ther kind that's not very big, but full uv kinks an' life, an' when yer git one on yer line yer know it. Yer don't always land 'em in ther boat, but when yer do, yer've got something worth fishin' for, an' them's mackeral. An' ther best part uv it is that there's lots uv 'em ev'ry year, an' yer can allers ketch 'em. Elinor Day is one uv ther last kind, an' yer see yer thought you hed her landed, but she fell off'n ther hook an' bit at another bait an' got ketched. Yer stay round here a while, rest up an' see yer folks an' then go back ter work. Hard work an' lots uv it is ther best medicine I know uv fer trouble. Some day yer'll run

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ercroost ernother girl, an' yer'll fall in love with her, an' wonder what ever possessed yer to think that when ther Lord got Elinor done he'd destroyed ther pattern. Yer don't believe what I'm tellin' yer now, an' I shan't try ter make yer. But I've seen more uv ther world than you hev, an' hed more time ter watch people.

"Once in er while yer see er man er woman that falls in love only once an' then forever, but pooty seldom, pooty seldom. I've seen great big men faint when their wives wuz buried, an' hev ter be lugged home frum ther graveyard, an' be so heartbroken, an' carry on so that it seemed ez though they needed watchers; but they generally went er huntin' up number two so soon after, that most uv ther neighborhood wuz scandalized, 'cept ther old maids, an' they wuz, too, ez soon ez they found out they wuzn't wanted. It's er desease, Ed, that yer can hev more'n once, an' ther second attack is gen'rally worse than ther fust. Here yer are at yer home, an' there's ther two best friends yer ever hed er ever will hev—yer father an' mother. Good-by, Ed. Come an' see me before yer go back."

In one short week Edward was again at his

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desk, and while he found Still's prescription, hard work, a good remedy for his disease, yet it was not to be supposed that a cure would be effected in a moment. He had received a letter from Elinor Day in which she informed him that she was engaged to Davenport, and wherein she endeavored to make him believe that there had never been any definite understanding between them, and that she had arrived at the conclusion that in giving him up she was doing the best possible thing for his future happiness. And he had replied wishing her all the happiness possible, yet feeling that he had been treated unfairly and dishonorably. He had been tempted to write a sharp, sarcastic letter in reply, raving about the power of gold and making her see that she had ruined his life. But on reflection he had decided to write the letter that any good friend would write in reply to the announcement of an engagement. If it had only been a man who had treated him that way! How he would have enjoyed scorching him with a letter, and disarranging the contour of his countenance the first time they met! But she was a woman, and—well, she was Elinor.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The town of Bartlett had its one rich man as every town has. There were a number of men, both merchants and farmers, who did not owe a cent in the world, except possibly their monthly bills, and who never had to be asked twice to pay an honest debt.

But the richest man, and at the same time the meanest, was Rhoderick Friend. His father had been the owner of quite a number of fishing vessels and "coasters" in the days when the fishing business and the coasting trade were at their height, and he had been the only child, and consequently, when his father died, the son inherited all of the property. He immediately sold all the vessels and retired to a small farm and became the money lender of the town, and heaven help the man who ever got into his clutches, for noth-

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ing but a miracle would keep Rhoderick Friend from sucking the life blood out of his victim. Men never went to him but once. There was no occasion to, for they had nothing to borrow upon after the first meeting.

The moment that Rhoderick Friend learned that one of his intended victims needed money he did not go to him, but he got ready for him, and like a spider in his web waiting the unwary fly, bided his time. He knew the man would not come to him until he had exhausted every possible means of raising the money elsewhere. He knew that the majority of the people in the town despised him and the rest feared him, but he did not care for their opinions, and he paid no attention to what he heard said about himself.

Let him have the chance to lend them money and they might say what they would. The rates of interest he demanded and got, if compared with that charged by Shylock, would have made the old Jew appear to have been a charitable institution and one who went about seeking to do good.

Friend had started in life working on his father's farm or vessels, had saved every penny

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he could get his hands on, and this amount added to what his father left him, had made him wealthy enough for all decent purposes, considering the town in which he lived. But this was not enough for the covetous, greedy man.

He had added to the amount of his wealth by the rates of interest he ground out of people, but in addition to that source of income he had a better one. He ever studied means and ways of not only getting what was his due, but also getting all that the unwary borrower had.

If the price of farms or cattle and horses was high, every loan that was due and payable was allowed to run along, and the poor borrower was informed that there was no necessity of paying at that time, and the loan could stand for a while, the rate of interest continuing to be paid. But the moment that the price of the property loaned upon fell, payment was immediately demanded.

The borrower, horror stricken at the demand, endeavored to borrow the money elsewhere, but found it impossible in the poor condition of the money market. Entreaties, pleadings, even threats addressed to Rhoderick Friend fell upon

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deaf ears. The mortgages were foreclosed, the property bid in at the auction by the only man that could afford to purchase, held by him until a good price could be obtained and then sold at a handsome profit. And as his financial operations extended over the entire county, he naturally became the owner from time to time of a number of farms which he always avoided selling for cash if a possible thing. For once sold for cash, the chance of Rhoderick Friend again getting it into his clutches was decidedly diminished. He, therefore, always preferred to take a mortgage on the farm for about seventy per cent. of the purchase money at a good rate of interest.

A pleasanter, more agreeable man for a stranger to deal with apparently did not exist. He always declared that he did not care to sell the farm in question. "Good farm, and probably could get a larger profit by holding it and running it himself. Still, if the purchaser's heart was set on it, possibly he would sell for a fair price. Came into his hands through a poor investment, and didn't expect to get out whole. Didn't know just then how to invest the money, and consequently shouldn't sell unless the purchaser would pay

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about thirty per cent. of the price in cash, and give a mortgage back for the balance at a fair rate of interest, considering that the times were bad and money rather tight just now. Better make mortgage for one year, but of course, unless something happened it could run along just the same when the year was up."

And thus the purchaser was induced to take the farm, and give the mortgage, and Rhoderick Friend rode home with his mortgage and money, grinning and chuckling, knowing that in a majority of cases the money paid as part of the purchase price was clear gain, as he would have the farm back again at the first convenient opportunity.

His meanness to other people extended also to his own family. He regarded children, and he had a number of them, as a misfortune, and a source of expense until they got old enough to work. His daughters were compelled to assist their mother about the house, and his sons worked on the farm as soon as they were large enough to perform even the slightest labor.

His wife had been a bright, pretty girl when he had married her, and had believed that he

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would be the ordinary good husband. But he had cheated her as he had cheated every other person that ever listened to him. Tough as a knot himself, never knowing from personal experience what sickness meant, he did the work of two men, working from sunrise until he could not think of another thing to do that would earn him a penny, and he expected her to do the same.

The children left home as soon as it was possible to earn even an existence elsewhere, for the law made them free at twenty-one years of age; but for her, marriage meant slavery for life. She had no relatives to give her a home if she had left him, and she could not earn her own living, for she was a small, delicate woman when he had first married her, and she had grown old and feeble before her time. At first her complaints had met with no response, then with sneers of unbelief, and finally with blows.

On one occasion when he had lifted his hand against the woman, and had sent her reeling and half fainting against the wall of the room, Stillman Gott had been passing the house, and turning his head at the sound of loud words, had seen the blow struck.

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A moment later Rhoderick Friend found himself on the floor, and Still, with blazing eyes, standing over him.

“Rhod Friend,” said Still, “if yer ever dare ter strike that woman ergin an’ I see yer, I’ll kill yer ez I would kill er snake, ef I hev ter spend ther rest uv my days in prison ter pay fer it. Yer mis’rable, cowardly cur! Why don’t yer git up an’ make er blow at me so’s I kin hev an excuse ter lick yer till yer mother wouldn’t know yer? I’ll tell yer why! It’s ’cause yer hain’t got ther spunk uv er clam, an’ no man hez what’ll strike er woman. You kin skin people, I s’pose, ’cause ther law’ll let yer, but ther law won’t let yer beat yer wife, yer low lived skunk,” and bidding the woman to notify him if ever her husband struck her again, and assuring her that he would see that he was arrested and punished, Still went his way.

Up to that moment, Rhoderick Friend had no particular feeling for or against Still. But from that time he feared him, and fearing him, therefore hated him. He never lost an opportunity to sneer at Still or make remarks that while they said little possibly meant a good deal.

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On one occasion while he was orating in one of the county stores in the village and making his customary remarks about Still, he was suddenly seized from behind by the coat collar and legs, swiftly carried out of the store and deposited in the horse trough in front of the door, and forcibly and by no means gently, soused up and down in the water until nearly drowned.

As he crawled out of the water and gasped for breath, he heard a voice say:

"There, sir, I guess some uv ther meanness is kind uv washed out uv yer, but ther next time I'll leave yer in soak over night, consarn yer. I give yer fair warnin' now that ev'ry time I hear yer sayin' er word erginst me, I'll punish yer some way, ef I hev ter mop up ther floor with yer till I wear yer out up to yer shoulder blades, yer good fer nothin' sculpin," and standing in front of him was Stillman Gott, with a grinning crowd of admiring friends around him.

If looks or thoughts would have killed him, Still would have died that moment, but Friend knew that he would be a child in Still's hands if he attacked him, and he walked away in silence, the laughter of the crowd following him

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and stabbing him every step. Still had made an enemy of a man who was accustomed to waiting for smaller things than revenge, and Friend bided his time.

CHAPTER TWELVE

There was a long lane leading from the main road near Friend's barn that wandered back through the pastures and wood lots over to a small body of water called the salt pond, and several times Friend had seen Still coming through the lane to the main road after dark, generally with a basket in his hand.

The two men had not spoken to one another, nor had either one apparently been aware of the existence of the other except that on one occasion, Still, willing to forget what had happened and having no ill will toward Friend, had bade him good evening, but had met with no response other than a surly growl.

It was getting into the latter part of the summer, and the "breathing spell" that comes between haying and harvesting in farm life had arrived. The weather had been particularly dry

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that summer, and the springs and wells were low enough to be a source of anxiety to the farmers. The well near the house of Friend had run dry, and water was procured from another down in the field near the shore of the bay.

Mrs. Friend had tugged pails of water up to the house day after day, while her husband sat in a chair fanning himself or smoking.

One evening she had been too tired to take the journey, and had decided to postpone that much of her work until the next morning, when upon going to the kitchen for a drink of water before retiring, Friend had found the pail empty.

"Here, Marthy, why don't yer tend ter bizness? I want er drink an' ther pail's empty," he bawled out.

"Can't you go down an' git er pail?" asked the tired woman in fear and trembling.

"What's that? Can I git er pail? S'pose I can, but I won't. I ain't doin' housework jest yit. G'long now an' be quick erbout it," and the man sat down, while the wellnigh exhausted woman picked up the pail and started out of the house, knowing too well that a moment's hesitation would bring a blow instead of words.

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As she came up the slope toward the house dragging her tired feet and the heavy pail slowly along, she saw a light in the direction of the barn that caused her to forget all her troubles and fatigue.

She sprang toward the house crying, "Rhod, Rhod, the barn's afire," and as she passed the door on her way across the road to the barn, her husband rushed past her. She followed as fast as she could, and when she arrived at the barn, her husband was pulling the farm wagon out through the open door with a man, whom she recognized by the glare of the fire as Still, pushing from behind.

The cattle apparently had escaped from the burning building in some way, for she could hear them bellowing with fright in the lane that led from the barnyard to the pasture.

There was nothing for the neighbors who had quickly assembled to do but stand and watch the blaze and keep the other buildings from igniting from the showers of sparks and bits of burning shingles that filled the air. As the fire died down so that there was no longer any danger, the excited men and women walked to the house and

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sat down to talk the matter over.

"How do yer think it ketched?" inquired one of the neighboring farmers of Friend.

"It didn't ketch, it was sot," was the angry reply.

"Sot? Well, I declare! Hev yer any idee who sot it?" asked another neighbor.

"Yes," replied Friend, "I've not only got an idee, but I'm sartain who sot it. 'Twas Still Gott, an' I'll have him in jail 'fore 'nother sun-down if there's any law in ther county."

The gathering as one man turned to ascertain what Still would say in reply, but he was not to be seen. It was then recollected by some one that he had gone toward his home as soon as all danger was over, remarking that "He guessed he wuzn't needed any more, so he'd better be gittin' toward home."

A few days after the fire, Still was doing a little necessary work on his barn roof, when he heard some one call out, "Still, I want to see you a moment."

Looking around, he replied, "Hello, sheriff. What on earth do yer want uv me? I don't owe nobody, an' it can't be er breach uv promise case,

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ez I hain't so much ez looked crossways at any woman fer more'n twenty years. Howsomever, I'll come down, same ez Zaccheus did in Bible times when he wuz called," and coming down the ladder to the ground, he sat down on a milking stool and said:

"Now, sheriff, set down, an' let me know what yer want."

"Still, I want to ask you one or two questions, and you needn't answer them unless you want to."

"Go ahead, sheriff, and ask away. I ain't no 'ntelligence office, an' if y're goin' to inquire 'bout g'ography er hist'ry I'm er little rusty, but ef it's erbout farmin' er fishin', or who'd be ther best man ter run fer fust selectman next town meetin', or any triflin' thing like that, go ahead an' ask, an' I'll give yer my opinion fer what it's wuth, and yer can use it er not, jest ez yer like."

"Still, this is a serious matter, and I want you to take time and answer me carefully. You know that Rhoderick Friend's barn was burnt the other night, for you were there at the time helping to get the stock out. Now I want you to tell me what you know about it. Remember,

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whatever you tell me about it, I may be obliged to tell to someone else later."

"Well, now, Bill, leavin' ther sheriff off an' talkin' as two men an' two friends, I'll tell yer all I know about it, an' ez fer yer tellin' it, yer can put it in the county paper ez fer ez I care. I wuz comin' down the road that night about nine o'clock, ez near ez I can figger it, an' I wuz er little piece above Rhod's barn, up ther lane leadin' over to ther pond, when I see er light what I knew wuzn't the moon nor no lantern in ther barn. I stopped an' looked fer er minute, an' then I give er jump an' er yell, an' I lit out fer that barn like sixty. I knew it wuz er fire, an' I opened the barn doors, jumped into ther tie up, undid ther stanchills, an' let the cattle out, unhitched the hoss an' started ter see what ter do next; I helped Rhod git his wagon out, but by that time things wuz so warm an' sort uv sultry in ther barn that it wuz er case uv bake er git out, an' so I lit out. In erbout er minute, I sh'd say, some uv ther neighbors had got there, but there wuz nothin' ter do but stand and see it burn, an' look out that none uv ther sparks ketched on ther house an' ther other

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buildin's. I stayed round 'till ther fire wuz out an' nothin' more ter do, an' then I jogged erlong home an' went ter bed. That's ther whole story, Bill, in er nutshell. Now, what yer drivin' at?"

"Well, Still, I'd rather be kicked than tell you what I'm here for, but Rhod Friend has sworn out a warrant for your arrest, an' I'm here to serve it and take you to jail. You know how I feel towards you, and I don't forget that we have known each other since we were boys, but I've got my duty to perform, no matter who it hits, and I've got to ask you to go with me. I'll stop anywhere you want me to so that you can get bail, and you better make arrangements for some of the neighbors to look after your horse and the house for a few days."

Still had stood up while the sheriff was talking, and was gazing off over the bay with a quiet look in his eyes. As the sheriff finished talking, he straightened up his full height of six feet, and said quietly:

"Sheriff, y're sheriff now, an' not Bill. I ain't ther best man that ever lived, an' I ain't callin' attention ter any uv my good p'int, if I've got any, in what I'm going ter say, but man an' boy

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I've lived in this town ever since I wuz born, an' my father an' mother b'fore me. They're both layin' over here in the graveyard, an' some day I'll lay beside 'em. I never did nothin' durin' their lives to make 'em 'shamed uv me, and I hain't done nothin' since they died that would keep me from lookin' any man, woman or child in ther face. I'm goin' with yer 'cause that's ther law, but, sheriff, I'm ez innercent uv burnin' that barn ez er two-year-old child. Jest drive over ter one uv ther neighbors with me, an' I'll arrange for some one ter look out fer the place till I git back, an' if there's any justice er common sense in ther world, I'll be back ergin soon, er holdin' up my head same's I've always done."

The couple drove quickly to Allan Carter's house, and as Allan came out of the house to meet them, Still remarked, "Allan, you remember, don't yer, what ther good book tells erbout Saint Paul bein' arrested an' put in jail? Well, I'm follerin' in his steps ter that extent, an' in my opinion I'll git out ergin jest ez easy ez he did an' erbout ez quick."

The story was soon told to the astonished friend, and Allan having promised to look after

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Still's little farm, the sheriff and Still rode away toward the county jail.

The jail was reached late in the afternoon, and Still was locked up in a cell, the friendly sheriff remarking to him, "Still, it isn't necessary for me to tell you my own private ideas about this case, in fact it wouldn't be proper for me to do so. I would rather take you into my own house than lock you up here in jail, but I must do my duty without thinking of my own feelings. I hope you don't feel hard toward me?"

"Look here, sheriff," replied the prisoner, "yer keep right on doin' yer duty, an' I'll do mine. Why, good Lord, man, what hev I ter feel hard about? Yer hain't done nothin' wrong. Yer hed yer choice between arrestin' me er resignin' yer office, an' 'taint human nature fer any man ter resign an office. I don't feel hard toward nobody, 'cept mebbe toward Rhod Friend, ther feller who swore out ther warrant. Ez fer ez he is concerned, I've nothin' ter say now. He hates me like pizen an' would swear his soul away ter make me trouble. Yer go right erlong 'tendin' ter bizness, an' I'll be ez snug ez er bug in er rug. Stayin' here er few days won't hurt my

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health any, an' there ain't much doin' on ther farm jest now. Things'll be jest ez pleasant fer me as fer most uv 'em that's here, unless I miss my guess."

Early in the evening the keeper of the cells in the corridor where Still was imprisoned came to the cell door and said in a guarded voice, "Still, Still, are you awake?"

"Hello, Tom, is that you?" answered Still. "Yes, I'm awake. Been 'sleep, but this bed hain't got no feathers in it an' feels kind uv hummocky in spots. I sh'd say that ther tick is filled with cord wood er hardware. Ort ter last well, but yer ain't inclined ter snuggle down on it. Guess I wuz sleepin' kind uv light so ez not ter rest too heavy on ther hard spots. Hev yer come ter make er call? Sorry I can't ask yer in, but ther boarders here hev ter be mighty careful who they invite in. Yer see, there's apt ter be more or less 'spicious characters er hangin' eround er jail, and ther boarders is mighty select. Mostly selected by ther 'sheriff."

"Still," said the keeper, earnestly, "don't you understand this is a serious thing? How on earth you can joke about it is more than I can

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understand. Wait a moment till I see if anybody is listening.”

The keeper moved away from the door of the cell and walked up and down the corridor. Presently he returned and resumed the conversation in the same guarded voice.

“Now, look here, Still, I’ve known you a lifetime, and I am not going to ask you if you set that barn afire or not. I don’t want to know. One thing is certain, if you are convicted, you will get a stiff sentence in the state prison. The judges are determined to stop such things, and it will be a long day before you see Bartlett again. When everybody is asleep I am going to open your cell door, and as soon as I go away you get out, go down to the end of the corridor, get out of the window, drop to the ground and clear out. It will be an easy thing to do, for the bars on the window are all loose, and a strong man like you could wrench them off easy. Go ahead, and good luck to you. Once out of that window, take to the woods and you never will be caught. You can get to the railroad before any one knows you are gone, and then with the money I’ll give you, you can be half way to Can-

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ada before they will know what to do.”

“Tom, when I git out uv here, I’ll show yer some day that I thank yer fer yer friendship, but, heavens an’ earth, do yer s’pose fer one minute that I’d er come ez fer ez ther jail ef I’d been guilty? Why, bless yer soul, I wouldn’t hev gone two rod frum my own dooryard. Sheriff’s er good feller, an’ plucky, an’ all that, but ef I’d hed an idee uv gittin’ way, he couldn’t hev held me ez long ez ’twould hev taken ter say Jack Robinson. Why, ther best day he ever saw he couldn’t hold me. I’d er gone ’round him like er cooper ’round er cask. I’d er fetched him jest one slat, an’ lit inter the bushes so quick ’twould hev made his head swim er thinkin’ uv it afterwards. But yer, see, Tom, I hain’t done nothin’. I’m ez innercent ez you are, an’ I ain’t ergoin’ ter knock my case in ther head by runnin’ away. No, sir, I hain’t got all ther brains in ther county, but what I hev is in good workin’ order an’ I’m usin’ ’em. If I should run one step now, nothin’ in ther Lord’s world would ever make people think I wuz innercent. I’m goin’ ter stop here till I get bailed out er till my trial, an’ yer’ll find me er headin’ up inter the

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wind every second. Don't yer fret about me one bit. I'm goin' ter try an' find er soft spot in this bed, an' if I find it I'm goin' ter coil myself down on it an' git some sleep. Good night, Tom."

The keeper moved away from the cell door and Still sat down on the side of the bed. As he sat there thinking of what had happened, the voices of the congregation assembled in the village church for the weekly meeting came in through the corridor window, as if appealing to the inmates of the jail.

"Now that's kind uv eur'us," mused Still. "There's er prayer meetin' goin' full blast, with me, er feller that's allers tended ehurch, cooped up here in jail. Singin' 'Where is my wand'rin' boy tonight,' hey? Good song, but doesn't apply much to ther fellers in ther jail. They'd like ter be wand'rin' fast enough ef only they hed ther chance. An' I s'pose there'll be er lots uv prayers fer ther heathen in forrin lands said over there, and pooty soon Deacon Childs'll git up an' reel off his regerlation prayer. He gen'rally starts it in Bartlett, but it ain't five minutes before he's informin' ther Lord all erbout

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er pack uv slit eyed half breeds over in China an' Burmeh, that, if yer'd believe ther deacon, are settin' up nights er waitin' fer missionaries ter bring 'em ther simon pure article, when ther truth is there's er good many heathin within er stone's throw uv the deacon right here in jail, who need religion worse'n ther deacon does himself, an' that's bad enough. Ther deacon's prayers don't go any higher in my opinion than ther meetin' house roof, er start frum any lower down than his collar bone. Well, there's one consolation, most uv ther prayin' that's been done fer me I've done myself. Guess I'll lay down an' take er nap," and in a few moments Still was sound asleep.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The next day Still was brought before the local judge, and after a hearing the judge found probable cause to hold him for the grand jury, although in summing up the case he remarked that it was not his duty under the circumstances to pass on the question of the guilt of the prisoner, but only to decide whether or not there was any cause to suspect, so to speak, that the act had been committed by the defendant. He intimated that if the final question of conviction or acquittal had rested with him, his decision might have been otherwise.

Bail was quickly procured, and Still returned to his little farm, awaiting the action of the grand jury. A few weeks later, to the surprise and indignation of a large majority of the neighbors, an indictment was found against Still, and it was now certain that he would have to be tried by a jury for the crime of incendiarism.

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Allan Carter and numerous other neighbors offered assistance to Still in the way of testimony to his good character and proposals to employ counsel, but to all of their kind offers Still replied:

"I may want some uv yer ter go ter court when ther time comes an' say er good word fer me, but I don't need no lawyer fer this case. It's ez plain ez ther nose on my face that they hain't got no case, only er sneakin' suspicion that they could jest ez well tack on ter anybody else ez on ter me."

Fall came, and the day of the trial arrived. Every man that could possibly get away from his farm was at the court house, a few attracted out of curiosity, but most of them because they felt that a grave wrong had been done to an honest man.

When previously arraigned Still had pleaded "not guilty," and when the case was called for trial the presiding judge said in a kindly tone of voice: "Mr. Gott, have you counsel? If not, I will continue the case until you procure one; or, if you are unable to procure counsel, I will appoint some member of the bar to protect your interests."

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"Judge," replied Still, "if this wuz er case where there wuz some pints uv law ter be talked erbout, I'd er hed er lawyer an' would hev paid him myself. But it's jest er question uv one man's word erginst ernother, an' I guess I kin talk er little without any lawyer ter help."

"Very well," said the judge, "that is your privilege. Mr. District Attorney, you may proceed with the case."

The first and principal witness for the government was the complaintant, Rhoderick Friend, who testified that he was sitting in his house when he heard his wife scream that the barn was on fire. That he rushed out at once, ran to the barn, and found the defendant, Gott, coming out of the barn by the small door. That he, the witness, rushed into the barn through another door and began dragging out his wagon, and that the defendant, coming from the inside of the barn again, assisted him in getting the wagon out by pushing from behind. By that time some of the neighbors had arrived, and he did not notice Gott again until the fire was practically out, when he asked him how he came to be in the neighborhood of the barn at that hour.

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The witness further testified that the defendant, Gott, made no reply to his question at first, and, when questioned again, replied that he did not know as he was obliged to tell where he went nights.

The defendant, Gott, had threatened him on several occasions, and had been seen by the witness several times lately near the barn of the witness, and when met by the witness had turned and walked away without speaking.

As the district attorney ceased questioning, Friend started to leave the witness stand, when Still, rising quickly from his seat, said:

"Wait er minute, I've got er few things I'd like ter ask yer. Fust time I threatened yer wuz in yer own house, wuzn't it?"

"Yes."

"Caught yer strikin' yer wife an' knocked yer flat, an' told yer I'd hev yer put in jail if I ever ketched yer doin' it ergin, didn't I?"

Friend got red in the face and hesitated for a moment, and then in a low voice answered, "Yes."

"An' ther second time I ketched yer talkin' behind my back in er store in Bartlett village

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and ducked yer in ther hoss trough, didn't I?"

"Yes, you did," was the angry answer.

"An' I said next time I'd soak yer over night, didn't I?"

"Yes."

"Threatened yer with water 'stead uv fire, eh?"

"'Spose so," was the reply.

"Did I ever threaten ter burn yer buildin's, or do anything 'cept put yer in jail er ther waterin' trough?"

"Well, I thought—"

"Never mind whut yer thought. Did I ever threaten ter burn yer buildin's?"

"Don't know ez you ever did," was the surly reply.

"Mr. Friend, who got yer cattle out uv ther barn?"

"Don't know."

"When did yer find out that they wuz safe?"

"Don't know exactly. Think some of ther neighbors told me they was in the lane after the fire was out."

"Now, Mr. Friend, you hain't felt real lovin' toward me since I licked yer, hev yer?"

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"No, I hev'n't," was the reply in an angry tone of voice.

"What time wuz yer out ter ther barn last that night before ther fire?"

"Just after dark I went out ter milk ther cows."

"Little late on yer milkin', wan't yer?"

"Yes, I was. I was away that afternoon and didn't get home till late."

"Humm. Out as usual, reliev'in' the sufferin' and needy?"

A roar of laughter went round the court room at this question, for everybody in the county knew the mean and grasping nature of Rhoderick Friend. As soon as quiet had been restored, the witness, who was well nigh bursting with rage, answered, "I was tendin' ter my business."

"Oh, I see," said Still. "Well, now, did yer milk in ther dark, or did yer hev er light?"

"I had a light."

"What kind uv er light?"

"Kerosene lamp."

"Kind uv er funny thing ter take ter the barn, wuzn't it?"

"Yes, p'raps so, but I couldn't find my lan-

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tern and was in er hurry."

"Well, after yer got through milkin', what did yer do?"

"Took my milk and went inter ther house."

"How many pails uv milk did yer hev?"

"Two."

"How big pails wuz they?"

"Ten-quart pails."

"Wuz they full?"

"Yes, pretty full."

"Did yer go out ter ther barn ergin before ther fire?"

"No."

"What did yer do with ther lamp?"

"Took it inter ther house."

"Well, now, Mr. Friend, if yer hed er ten-quart pail uv milk in each hand, how did yer carry ther lamp?"

The witness for a moment did not reply, and then in a nervous, agitated tone of voice replied:

"I must have gone out ter ther barn er second time for ther lamp."

"Yer say yer must have. Did yer?"

"I think I did."

"Don't want any thinks," said Still, "jest give

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us cold facts. Did yer?"

"Yes, I did," was the reply, in a tone of desperation.

"Guess that's all fer now," said Still.

Mrs. Friend then took the stand, and testified that she saw the blaze and cried out to her husband, and as quickly as possible followed him to the barn. She did not see Gott until he helped her husband get the wagon out of the burning building, nor did she see him afterward until after his arrest.

She did see him one day, however, after he was "bailed out," near the ruins of the barn, poking around in the ashes and burned wood, and she saw him pick up something, put it in his pocket and walk away. Couldn't tell what it was he picked up, as she was some distance from him. Still now started to question the witness.

"Mis' Friend, do yer do all yer own work, er do yer hev er hired girl ter help yer?"

The woman's face flushed, as a suppressed titter went round the room at the thought of Rhoderick Friend ever paying out a penny for assistance for his wife.

"I do my own work," she answered.

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"I s'pose yer use kerosene lamps in yer house, same's ther rest uv us?"

"Yes."

"Fill 'em yerself ev'ry day, er does yer husband sometimes do it?"

"I always do it."

"How many lamps hev yer?"

"Four. Two in the kitchen, one in the dining room and one in the sitting room."

"How many did yer hev ther night uv ther fire?"

"Four."

"Hev yer got ther same four now yer hed then?"

The woman hesitated, and started to look in the direction where her husband sat, but in a quick tone of voice Still said:

"Look straight at me, Mis' Friend, and answer ther question. Air they ther same four?"

"No."

"How many new ones hev yer bought?"

"One."

"What lamp's place did ther new one take?"

"One of the kitchen lamps."

"What became uv that lamp?"

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"I don't know."

"When did yer miss it?"

"I couldn't say exactly," replied the woman in a trembling tone of voice.

"Did yer miss it when yer went ter fill it ther day after ther fire?" questioned Still. "I want ther whole truth, Mis' Friend, and I want yer ter remember that yer've called Almighty God ter witness that yer'll tell it."

The woman burst into tears, and sobbingly answered, "Yes."

"When did yer husband git ther new one?"

"A day or two after ther fire."

"Did he say anything ter yer erbout it?"

"Must I tell that?" asked the weeping woman of the judge. Upon being informed that it was a proper question and that she must answer it, but that she need not give the conversation, she replied, "Yes."

"That'll do," said Still.

Several other witnesses testified to seeing Still at the fire, and two of them testified that they were present at the watering trough affair. Still did not cross-examine these witnesses, simply remarking as each one testified: "Don't care to

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ask any question uv er man what tells ther truth."

"Mr. Gould," called the distriet attorney, and Joe Gould shuffled up to the witness stand, his red nose standing out from the rest of his face like a beacon light shining through the fog.

He testified that he was walking along the road toward home on the night of the fire, and that when he got opposite the barn of Rhoderick Friend he heard a noise that sounded as though some one was in the barn. He looked up and saw a man coming out of the barn. At first he supposed it was Rhoderick Friend, and consequently walked along. A few minutes later he heard Friend's wife cry fire, and he ran back to ascertain what was the matter. When he got to the house again, he saw Friend running toward the barn, and he followed him and did what he could to help put the fire out. The man he saw coming out of the barn was Stillman Gott. As he finished his testimony Still began to cross-examine the witness.

"Wuz yer the fust man what got there after Friend?"

"Yes, sir."

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"Wuz yer round there all ther time till ther fire wuz out?"

"Yes, I wuz, an' some time after."

"Did yer see anybody lettin' ther cattle out uv ther barn?"

"Don't think I did."

"What did yer do yerself?"

"Well, there wuzn't much ter do 'cept stan' round. Fire wuz goin' too brisk ter save anything."

"Do yer know whether ther cattle wuz out uv ther barn?"

"Yes, they wuz. I heard 'em up ther lane."

"What did yer see me doin' when yer got there?"

"Helpin' pull ther wagon out."

"Look sheepish, er anything like that?"

"No; you wuz pretty well worked up, though."

"Ev'rybuddy wuz, wuzn't they?"

"Guess they wuz."

"Where'd yer been that evenin'?"

"Up ter ther tavern in ther village."

"On bizness?"

"No; jest up there."

"Hed anything ter drink? I don't ask yer

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where yer got it, on'y whether yer hed any er not."

"Yes, some."

"How much?"

"Don't know."

"Didn't keep any track uv 'em, did yer?"

"No, I didn't."

"Well, now, Mr. Gould, when did yer fust know you wuz goin' ter be er witness in this case?"

"It wuz jest before ther fust trial."

"Yer mean when Squire Eaton heard ther case in ther village, when I wuz fust 'rested?"

"Yes."

"Who told yer ter come ter court then?"

"Rhod Friend."

"Hedn't told him before that what yer see at ther fire an' what yer thought erbout it?"

"No."

"Who spoke fust erbout it, you ter him, er he ter you?"

"He spoke ter me fust."

"What did he say?"

"Don't remember exactly."

"Well, give it ez nigh ez yer kin."

"He said he wanted me ter come ter court an'

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tell that I seen yer comin' out uv ther barn before his wife hollered fire."

"That wuz ther fust thing he sed ter yer erbout ther fire?"

"Yes."

"An' yer hedn't said er thing ter him erbout it before that?"

"No."

"An' yer hedn't told him that yer seen me er comin' out uv ther barn before he sed that?"

"No, I hedn't."

"Well, how did he know yer knew anything erbout it then?"

The witness hesitated for a moment, and, being pressed for an answer, finally replied that he didn't know.

"So fur, so good," said Still. "Now, Mr. Gould, we'll take ernother tack. Hezn't Rhod Friend got er mortgage on all yer property?"

The district attorney immediately jumped to his feet and objected to the question. "Please, your honor," he said, "there have been a number of questions asked by the defendant that, in my opinion, I could properly have objected to. But I realized that he was conducting his own case

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and had not had a legal training, and consequently I have said nothing. But it seems to me that the matter has now got so far that it is my duty to object. I fail to see what bearing the question of Gould's debts have upon this case."

"What do you say, Mr. Gott?" inquired the judge. "You must remember that any question you ask must relate to this case."

"Judge," replied Still, "I dunno any law, but ef ther witness answers ther way I think he will, it'll hev quite er lot ter do with this case. I don't want ter let ther cat out uv ther bag jest yet, but she's in there, er squirmin', an' ther strings are untied, an' she'll be out pretty soon, ef I don't miss my guess."

"The witness may answer the question," said the judge.

"Now, Gould, in case yer've forget what I sed, I'll ask yer ergin. Hezn't Rhod Friend got er mortgage on all yer property—farm, cow, en' ev'rything else, 'cept yer wife an' girl?"

"Yes, he hez; but that's got nothin' ter do with this," replied Gould.

"Mebbe not," said Still. "Howsomever, we'll go erhead an' see. Mortgage been overdue some

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time, hezn't it?"

"Yes, some time."

"Wuz overdue at ther time uv ther fire, wuzn't it?"

"Guess so."

"Guess so, eh? Didn't yer tell me last spring that Rhod Friend had threatened ter foreclose on yer?"

"Perhaps I did. Don't remember."

"Well, hedn't he?"

"Yes."

"Well, now, jumpin' over ter ther day yer hed yer talk with him erbout ther fire, did he say anything ter yer erbout ther mortgage?"

"Yes, somethin'," said the witness in a hesitating tone.

"What did he say?"

"Don't remember."

"Don't remember, eh? Well, let's see ef I kin prod yer mem'ry er little. Didn't he tell yer somethin' erbout yer goin' ez er witness in this case, an' then say er thing er two erbout ther mortgage?"

"Yes, he did."

"Well, now, tell ther jury an' judge what he

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sed ez nigh ez yer kin.”

“He sed that he wanted me ter say that I see yer comin’ out uv ther barn jest before ther fire broke out, an’ he’d hold still erbout ther mortgage fer erwhile.”

“Jesso, jesso,” said Still. “Well, yer’ve done it, ain’t yer?”

“Yes, I hev.”

“Well, now, could yer hev sworn it wuz me comin’ out uv that barn that night ef you’d been asked ther next day erbout it?”

“Dunno ez I could,” was the reply.

“How fur wuz yer frum ther barn when yer heard Friend’s wife holler fire?”

“Couldn’t say.”

“Hevn’t yer sworn when ther district attorney asked yer erbout it, that it wuz er few minutes after yer passed ther barn before yer heard Miss Friend holler fire?”

“Yes, I did.”

“Well, how fur do yer think yer walked in those few minutes?”

“Mebbe—I couldn’t say. Quite er piece, I guess.”

“Mr. Gould, yer’ve sworn that at fust when yer

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see ther man comin' out uv ther barn yer thought it wuz Rhod Friend. Now did yer ever change yer mind till Friend sent fer yer an' told yer what he wanted yer ter say, an' then sort uv reminded yer erbout ther mortgage?"

"Don't know as I did."

"That'll do," said Still.

This closed the case for the government.

In defence, as Still started to testify, the judge remarked:

"Mr. Gott, you are not obliged to testify if you don't want to."

"No," replied Still, "don't s'pose I am, but I guess I will."

Still then took the stand and told the same story that he had previously told the sheriff at the time of his arrest. He then continued as follows:

"When ther fire wuz over, I went home an' thought ther whole thing over, as to how it ketched. I met Miss Friend on ther road one day, an' she told me erbout Friend doin' his milkin' jest ez he hez swore. So erbout er week er two after ther fire I went up there one day when I knowed Friend wuz erway, an' poked

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eround in ther ashes an' dirt, an' I found this," and as he spoke he took out of his coat pocket part of a lamp, and the bottom part of a lamp chimney. "I found 'em," he resumed, "in ther spot where ther tie-up wuz, an' right where I see ther fire burnin' when I fust opened ther barn door."

The sharp questioning of the district attorney brought out nothing new, and did not in any way cause Still to change his story.

Finally the district attorney asked, "Mr. Gott, how did it happen that you were in the neighborhood of Mr. Friend's barn on that particular night?"

"I wuz out on er little private matter," answered Still.

"Private matter, eh? Calling on some lady friend?" asked the district attorney.

"Lord, no," said Still, smiling. "I hain't called on er woman fer more'n thirty years, an' proberly never shall, unless I lose my mind. I'm too old now ter be lookin' 'round fer some one ter set up with. Got past my day fer those things."

"Well, tell me where you had been then."

"Now, look here, Mr. Lawyer, where I wuz, er

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what I wuz doin', hain't got nothin' ter do with this case. I ain't ershamed uv what I wuz doin' that night, but fer ther sake uv some other folk's feelin's I'd ruther not tell."

"Answer the question," ordered the judge.

"All right, judge, if you say answer it I'll do it, but I'm sorry I've got ter. Ther truth is that I'd heard that Sam Peters' folks wuz havin' er hard time gittin' erlong, an' so I went up there after dark an' left er pertater bag full uv stuff fer 'em on their back porch. Sam used ter go ter school with me, an' hez allers been er hard workin', stedly feller, an' I wuz sorry fer him an' thought I'd sort uv help him out without lettin' him know who done it, 'cause Sam's kind uv proud. Cat's out uv ther bag now, an' I'm sorry I hed ter tell it, but that's where I'd been that night."

"That is all," said the district attorney, and Still left the witness stand and took his seat.

The case was closed as far as the evidence went, and the judge inquired, "Do you wish to argue the case?"

"Judge," said Still, "I dunno ez I want ter argue any, but I would like ter talk er little ter

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ther jury an' go over er few p'int's with 'em."

"Proceed," said the judge.

"Mr. Foreman, an' gentlemen, an' yer honor," said Still, "I ain't no lawyer, an' I ain't goin' ter make no speech, but I want ter call your attention ter two er three p'int's in this case. I've been listenin' ter what ther judge hez been sayin' ter ther juries in several other cases 'fore mine, an' I've found out that ther law says er man's innercent till er jury says he's guilty. So ter start with, I'm innercent, an' ther fact that I'm arrested don't count nothin'. I'm guilty only when yer decide I am, judgin' from ther evidence yer hear. In ther next place, ther judge sed that whoever makes er statement must back it up. He didn't say jest them words. He sed somethin' that I didn't ketch erbout burden uv proof an' so on; but it ermounds ter that. So that ef two fellers should tell yer two different stories erbout ther same thing, you'd hev ter give ther benefit uv ther doubt ter ther feller what's accused.

"Now what kind uv er case hev they got erginst me? Rhod Friend, ther man who wuz last in ther barn, left er lamp there, an'

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he knows it. An' he left it in such er place that one uv ther cows kicked it over er it fell over, an' that's what sot ther barn afire. He admits he took er lamp out to ther barn, but he tried ter make yer believe he took it inter ther house ergin. Did he? Not much. He knows it, an' that poor, scared critter uv er wife uv his knows it, too. Where is ther lamp now? What become uv it? Why, it disappeared ther mornin' after ther fire, an' Friend bought er new one, an' told his wife not ter say nothin' erbout it. What did he do that fer? Erfraid some uv ther neighbors would think he wuz puttin' on style er gittin' generous? No, sir. He knew that ef ther story erbout ther lamp leaked out, he couldn't lay it on me erbout ther barn burnin'.

"Then top uv ther lamp goin' out uv sight ez fer ez ther house is concerned, yer hev ther pieces uv er lamp I picked up out uv ther ashes uv ther barn. I guess we'll leave ther lamp just where Friend left it, in ther barn. An' then Joe Gould takes ther stand, middlin' sober fer him, an' he tells er story because he had ter, er lose all he hed in ther world. Take his story with er pinch uv salt, gentlemen. Yes, I guess yer better pickle

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it. Ther only man he see before ther fire was Rhod Friend himself er goin' ter ther house with ther milk. He thought it wuz Friend, an' he never'd thought diff'rent, ef he hadn't been made ter.

“An' then ther queerest thing uv all, ther very man they'd make yer believe sot ther fire, is seen helpin' Friend git his wagon out! An' ef I didn't let ther cattle out, who did? Not er soul claims he done it, an' yet they wuz saved. If I sot ther barn afire, would I stay there to save cattle? Ef I hated Rhod Friend an' sot his barn afire so's ter make him lose money, why wouldn't I let ther cattle burn too, an' let it cost him more rather'n less? Take ther stories an' think 'em over. Is it true er correct? Is it common sense? Is it anythin' but ther story uv er man who wuz bound ter lay it on ter me ef he could? It's erbout ez crazy ez what Lorindy Robinson sed when her husband, Timothy, joined ther Masons. Tim wuz sort uv foolin' with some of the members before the meetin', an' by accident put his hand on ther top uv 'n air tight stove and burnt it, an' Lorindy sed to her dyin' day that that wuz ther way ther Masons branded him. I don't ask yer to pay any

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attention to what I sed in my own behalf. Throw that all out, ef yer want ter, an' take ther stories uv Rhoderick Friend who hates me, his wife, who don't dare ter say her soul is her own, an' then ther story uv Joe Gould, who is owned body an' soul by Friend, and then this county haint got er leg ter stand on.

"I don't want yer ter let me go because there's some weak spot in ther evidence; I don't want yer ter let me go if there's even er sneakin' notion in yer mind that I'm guilty, but I want yer ter let me go because yer believe from ther bottom uv yer hearts that I'm an innercent man. It's gittin' nigh noon now, an' ez soon ez ther county attorney an' ther judge hev talked ter yer, yer'll hev er chance ter think this whole thing over, an' make up yer minds.

"Mr. Foreman an' gentlemen, what er yer goin' ter do with me? If I'm guilty, send me ter prison with yer votes, an' if I'm innercent, send me home. Yer may think that my home don't mean much ter me. There ain't no wife nor no children er waitin', nothin' there but an old dog an' ther stock, but it's home jest ther same ter me; it's ther place where I wuz born, an' ther

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place where my father an' mother lived an' died. Lonesome ez it is, it's ez sacred ter me ez your homes are ter you, an' I wouldn't want ter see it ergin if I wuzn't fit ter go inter it. Send me home, gentlemen, ter take up my work where I left it off this mornin', send me home ter my good neighbors an' friends, send me home, sayin' by your votes that I'm an innercent man.

"Mr. Foreman an' gentlemen uv ther jury, I see er picture once uv Justice. It wuz standin' with er bandage over its eyes, holdin' er pair uv scales. The idee wuz that Justice couldn't see nobody nor nothin' so's not ter be prejerdiced, and ez ther scales went down er up, so ther feller wuz guilty er innercent. Treat me jest that way. Shut yer eyes ter all feelin' fer er ergainst me, an' give yer verdict ercordin' ez ther scales go up or down."

A slight burst of applause was quickly suppressed, and the district attorney addressed the jury in a half-hearted manner, as though he realized that the case of the prosecution was a weak one.

The judge then charged the jury, stating the law governing such cases, and the jury retired to

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their room.

It did not seem as though five minutes had elapsed before they returned, and when questioned by the clerk of court as to whether they had agreed upon a verdict, the foreman of the jury replied that they had, and added in a firm voice, "not guilty."

Still arose from his seat, and the judge said, "Mr. Gott, the jury have found you not guilty of the charge, and I feel called upon to say that I regard their verdict as a just and correct one."

"Thank yer, judge," replied Still, "an' you, too, Mr. Foreman an' gentlemen. There ain't no black mark on my name now, 'cause yer've said that I didn't do it, but ther sting uv ther thing is left, an' that won't go away fer some time ter come. I ain't blamin' nobody fer that, ez it's ther risk ev'ry man takes, but I want ter be erlone erwhile 'till I get settled down ergin, an' then ther less my friends say erbout ther whole thing ther better I'll like it."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

A few days later, Allan Carter and some of the other near neighbors saw the dory of Still headed toward the shore of Sheep island, and inquiry at the farm adjoining the little home of Still enabled them to learn the truth of the matter.

Still had made arrangements for one of his neighbors to look after his live stock for several months, and had announced his determination to pass the winter on the island, cutting cordwood and living in the log camp that stood on his lot.

For several weeks Allan Carter did not intrude on Still's privacy, and then, armed with a basket of eggs and some fresh baked bread, he rowed across the bay to visit his friend and attempt to induce him to return to the mainland. The shore was soon reached, but the camp was empty and cold. As Allan Carter stood wondering in what direction he should go in order to find Still, the sharp chop of an axe as it struck into the side

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of a tree told him where the solitary man could be found.

A short walk through the woods and over the ledges brought him to an open space, and he saw Still just bringing a large spruce tree to the ground. The cracking of the brush announced the approach of some one, and Still turned around in time to see Allan Carter at his side.

"Hi, Allan," he said, as he wiped the sweat from his forehead with the back of his hand, "rather blust'ry day to go visitin', ain't it?"

"Well, it isn't the best day in the world," replied Allan, "but Mary sent you some eggs and things, and so I thought I'd hunt you up instead of leaving them in the camp.

"Much obliged ter Mrs. Carter," said Still; "eggs is eggs this time uv year, what with the hens layin' only half time, an' I wuz erbout run out uv that kind uv fruit. Let's walk back ter ther camp. It's erbout time ter eat ergin, an' seein' I've got comp'ny, I shall hev ter git out my best dishes an' er new tablecloth an' polish up ther silver spoons," he added with a laugh.

The two men walked back to the camp in silence, each wondering what the other was about

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to say—Still asking himself what the special errand of Allan could be, for which the eggs were only an excuse, and Allan trying to imagine how Still would take the remarks he intended to make.

The homely meal was soon eaten, the dishes washed and put away, and the two men sat down by the old rusty wood stove and lighted their pipes.

“Still,” said Allan, at length breaking the silence, “it seems to me as though you are kind of foolish staying over here alone. I think you had better come back and stay around awhile, and as soon as I get the rest of my fall work done I will come over with you, and we will chop your wood, and then some on my wood lot. Turn and turn about, you know. Then again, suppose you should be sick or get hurt, you might suffer for days before any one knew it. Don’t you think you’d better come back?”

“Allan,” said Still, “er better friend than you never lived, an’ no one knows it better’n I do. I’m here, an’ I’m goin’ ter stay ’till I git good an’ ready ter go back. Ez fer bein’ sick er gettin’ hurt, don’t yer fret er bit. When I wuz on here

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last summer sort uv cruisin' round er few days, I practiced sendin' Tige down ter Jim Conary's with er letter tied eround his neck. Jim an' I hed lots uv fun doin' it, an' I made up my mind that dog could do most anything but talk. So's fer ez bein' sick er hurt is concerned, I'll be all right; an' ez fer ez lonesomeness is concerned, there's somethin' goin' on all ther time over here. When I'm in ther camp ther dog's comp'ny, an' in ther woods, ther's ther deer, an' rabbits, an' pa'tridges ter watch when I'm restin', an' I like ter watch 'em, an' let 'em find out I won't hurt 'em.

"If yer ever try it, you'll be surprised at what's goin' on in ther woods. Jest go up er wood road, set down on er knoll, keep quiet an' listen. Fust you know, you'll hear er little paterin' over ther leaves, an' er little wood mouse'll go by. Then'll come er little louder noise, an' er rabbit'll hop out, an' when he sees yer, he'll set up an' work his nose at yer. In er minit er two ther tops uv ther trees'll begin ter whisper ter one ernother, er groanin' over somethin' jest ez if they wuz complainin', an' er couple uv red squirrels will git ter quarrellin'. Pooty soon er

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couple uv pa'tridges'll go whirrin' by, an' then yer'll hear er snort, an' if yer look up quick there'll be er big buck lookin' at yer with them big brown eyes uv his, an' away he'll go er crashin' through ther bushes.

"Then ev'ry thin'll be still fer er while, an' ther very silence'll seem ter be singin' er hymn ter yer. It's real quietin', Allan, lettin' ther woods an' ther things in 'em talk ter yer an' sort uv comfort yer, an' let yer see that God made things erbout right, an' that they stay so ez long ez people don't go to fussin' with 'em an' turnin' ther whole plan topsy turvy. I guess I can git more peace an' happiness over here than I can on ther Neck jest at present.

"Yer see, Allan, I haint felt reel pleasant since I wuz 'rested fer barn burnin'. Most uv ther people on ther other side uv ther bay do their duty by their God, their families, and their neighbors, but there's er few that's ez mean ez pusley, an' I want er chance ter sort uv fergit 'em. I'm feelin' er little ugly now, an' ef I stay over here this winter I'll git over it. Er lazy man never makes er good Christian, an' in my opinion ther best thing fer er man who is feelin' er leetle cross

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grained is ter go ter work an' keep at it fer erwhile. So I guess I won't go back. Glad ter see yer an' any uv ther folks any time, but I'll stay on the island a spell longer, I guess, till I git er little more sweetened up."

The tone in which Still spoke told Allan that further argument was unnecessary and useless, and, after a few moments' further conversation upon general topics, he left the island and went back to Bartlett Neck.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

"Hello, Still, hello; wake up, wake up." Bang, bang, and the door of the camp rattled and shook until it seemed as though the hinges would drop off.

"Yep," came the answer from within. "Wait er minute, till I draw on some clothes," and the next minute the door was opened and the voice of Still was heard in the darkness saying: "Come in, whoever yer are. This is no night ter stand 'round outdoors admirin' nature. There's er leetle too much uv it floatin' 'round jest now. Come in. Come in. Peter an' Paul, ef it ain't Joe Gould! Yer the last man ter come an' see me after what yer tried ter do ter me, an' I've er good mind ter shet ther door in yer face. But, ez I wouldn't keep er yaller dog out on er night like this, figgerin' that way, yer kin come in."

And then, having lighted a lamp, Still turned

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toward the man and said in a hard voice: "Now, what do yer want? Make it short an' sweet, an' then git out an' go where yer belong. Don't owe yer nothin', do I?"

"Still," said Joe, in a choked, strained voice, "my little Bessie is dyin', I think. She's been complainin' fer er few days uv er sore throat, an' now she can't talk an' she's full of fever, an' I guess it's diphtery, an' if I don't hev er doctor soon she'll die sure. I want yer ter go across an' git one. I'm ashamed ter ask yer; I'd go myself, but I can't leave her long enough alone ter go, an' ev'rybody's got their boats hauled up 'cept you. I jest struck through the woods, an' I come ter ask yer would yer try an' git ercross fer me. It's ez much ez er man's life is wuth ter try it, but I can't let my little girl die."

And the poor wretch turned away from Still, sat down in a chair, and, leaning his head on the table, broke down completely.

"Joe Gould," said Still, "yer started ez well ez most uv ther boys, an' yer hed one uv ther best women fer er wife ther Almighty ever let live. But yer have drunk up yer farm, yer've drunk yer wife inter ther grave, an' last week yer buried

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her, an' now yer choppin' wood here on ther island an' livin' from hand ter mouth, with that little girl dyin' because yer hain't half fed er clothed her. I ort ter take my axe an' split yer wide open, yer mis'erable, drunken beast. It sounds hard what I'm sayin' ter yer, but if I give yer what yer deserve, I wouldn't raise er finger ef I saw yer dyin'. I'm ergoin', fer ther sake uv ther woman what's in heaven er takin' ther fust bit uv rest an' comfort she's ever hed since she married yer, an' fer ther sake uv that little girl who shouldn't be blamed fer what yer've done. Yer cryin' over her is ther fust decent thing I known yer ter do in twenty years. How's ther wind?"

"Nor'west, an' blowin' er gale, Still; an' ther snow is comin' down faster'n I ever see it in my life. I dunno ez yer'd better try it. I don't want anythin' ter happen ter yer through me; I've got ernuff on my mind now. I wouldn't hev come after yer at all, but I jest couldn't stand hearin' my little girl moanin', an' sayin': 'Git er doctor, father, git er doctor.'"

Still looked out the door and replied: "Now, look here, Joe, I kin see that it's jest er howlin'

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fer keeps, an' it's er good, tough night, but I'm goin' ter try ter git ercross an' git that doctor, an' I guess I'll fetch all right. I've nobody or nothin' dependent on me 'cept ther stock an' my dog, an' I guess ther Almighty makes er p'int uv hevin' some people fixed that way fer jest such cases ez this. I'm ergoin ter try ter do it. Jest wait till I git my old sou'wester tied on, an' you come down ter ther shore an' give me er lift on ther dory. Then we'll see what kin be done. If I fetch ther doctor, well an' good; an', if I don't, you'll know that it's because I'm gone where they don't need no doctors, nor nothin' else."

They both walked out of the camp and worked their way through the drifts of snow and over the rocks down to the shore, and, grasping the sides of the dory which was drawn up on the beach, dragged it through the snow across the sands into the water.

Still seated himself in the boat, and picking up the oars, called out through the storm, "When it lets up er little, Joe, push her quick an' hard."

As he spoke, the wind ceased a moment as though to gather new strength, and as Joe, taking advantage of the lull in the storm, put his

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shoulders against the boat, Still took a mighty stroke with the oars, and in a moment boat and man were swallowed up in the darkness.

"Le's see," said Still, as the boat plunged into a sea and then mounted another, "considerin' how ther wind is blowin' now, I guess I'll p'int her about nor'west right up inter it, till I git under ther lee uv t'other shore, an' then if I head her down erlong shore, I'll jest erbout fetch Allan Carter's shore, an' that's ther best place ter land. Well, here goes fer ther longest an' wust pull I've ever took, but it's fer er sick baby an' that settles it. Sink er swim, survive er perish, as ther feller sed, I must keep her ergoin' now."

The boat drove up one sea and down over another, and soon the dark form of the island had disappeared, and Still was alone.

"Dunno ez I ever fully realized the full force uv that song, 'Pull fer ther shore,' till now," said Still through his teeth, as he tightened his grip on the oars, "but I'll take ther advice under ther circumstances an' keep her er goin'. Shan't reely git ther whole thing till I strike ther middle uv ther bay, an' then it'll be a case uv pull ev'ry minute an' ev'ry pound."

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The wind was apparently increasing every moment as Still neared the central part of the bay, and for a while it was doubtful whether the boat was going ahead or being driven back. But the sturdy, hardened muscles of the man finally prevailed, and little by little the dory drove through and over the seas, and soon Still realized that he was approaching the shore of the mainland. For every few moments, through the wind tumult of the storm as the wind died down for a moment, he could hear the roar of the raging waters as they rushed against the rocky shore and dashed themselves to pieces in their anger.

Nearer and nearer he worked his way toward the shore, and soon the lessening force of the wind told him that he was under the lee of the land. Turning the bow of his boat down the bay, he quickly neared his landing place.

Suddenly, as he threw his whole strength into a mighty stroke, a thole pin broke, the boat turned and fell into the trough of the sea, and before the sturdy oarsman could recover himself the dory was overturned and Still was in the water, with nothing but the feeble assistance of an oar between him and a watery grave. As he

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rose from the water and looked for the boat, he caught a glimpse of her as she disappeared in the darkness.

"Whew!" gasped Still, as he began swimming for the shore, "rather sudden change. I wasn't cal'lating goin' in swimmin' this time uv ther year, but it's er case uv swim now an' swim hard, or go out with ther tide, ez ther minister sed when he walked out uv church behind ther bride and groom."

For a moment it seemed as though the brave man would perish, but his pluck, and the innate desire to live that is implanted in the breast of every human being, kept him up till finally his feet struck the sand and he was safe.

Taking a deep breath, he ploughed his way up the shore and through the field to the road, and soon the night air resounded with his calls, as he rattled the latch of Allan Carter's door.

"For heaven's sake, Stillman Gott, whcre are you cruising a night like this?" asked Allen, as he opened the door. "Come in, come in, and let me shut the door. Must be something special to bring you off from the island a night like this."

"Allan," chattered Still, "yer jest stop askin'

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questions, start er fire in ther kitchen stove, and git me some dry clothin', while I git out of these wet ones. And if yer've got er drop of old 'red eye' handy, fetch that fust. I don't believe in takin' liquor 'cept fer medicine, but this is one uv those medicine times. Liquor is bad enough at ther best, an' er man that hankers after State uv Maine liquor hain't got much taste, but this ain't no time ter be squeamish erbout what yer drinkin'. I've had er hard time uv it so fer, an' it hain't het my blood up er single bit. Hurry up now, no time ter spare, 'cause as soon as I've warmed up an' got my clothes changed, I've got ter go clean over ter Hardwick fer Doctor Lufkin. Want yer hoss an' pung, an' all ther blankets an' robes you can spare. Keep movin', don't stand still, an' I'll tell yer about it as we go erlong. Bessie, Joe's girl, is awful sick, an' it's er case uv doctor or die."

"Still," said Allan, as he bustled from one thing to another, "Doctor Lufkin'll never go out on a night like this, much less go on to the island. I'm sorry for Joe, but you might as well give up now as any time. You're welcome to the horse and other things, but you're wasting

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your time and taking chances with your health that you are not called on to take."

"Allan, you keep movin', keep movin'; nothin' but ther Lord Almighty is goin' ter stop me, an' considerin' what I've been through already, an' that I'm doin' this fer one uv His little ones, I gwess He has no objections ter my goin' the rest uv ther way. Ez fer my health, ef I'd thought uv that on ther start, I'd be in my bed over in them camp this minit. 'Taint no pleasure trip I've taken so fer, an' I ain't borrrerin' yer hoss 'cause I'm crazy ter go er sleighin' ternight."

All this time Still was removing his wet clothing and dressing himself in the dry ones furnished by Allan. As Carter picked up the wet articles of apparel thrown aside by Still, he remarked, "Where's your boots, Still?"

"Well, now, Allan, when I go in swimmin' in the winter, I allers take my boots off, 'cause yer see, salt water makes 'em kind uv hard and stiff, an' so on this occasion when I fell overboard, I trod water till I could work them boots off, an' then I put fer shore. Yer take er pair uv leather boots full uv salt water, in er gale uv wind in ther winter, an' there's somethin' kind uv de-

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pressin' about 'em. Fust thought I'd throw off ther oilskins, too, but yer know I bought 'em only er few weeks ago, an' ther boots wuz old, so I hung on ter ther coat. Yer see it shed water better than ther boots did. Well, I'm dressed. Let's go out ter ther barn."

They proceeded to the barn and harnessed the horse into the pung, threw in all the robes and blankets they could find, put a shovel in the bottom, and Still started on his long, dreary drive to Hardwick.

Every mile and sometimes oftener, he was obliged to get out of the pung, dig the snow away from around the horse and shovel a path through drifts, while the horse rested and recovered his breath and strength.

Soon the woods of Hale's road were reached where the snow had not drifted so much, and quickening his pace, Still soon arrived at the doctor's house. Quickly blanketing his horse, he rang the bell, and the door opened in a few moments and the doctor appeared clad in a long dressing gown.

Before Still could make known his errand, the doctor said in a quick, impatient tone, "I can't

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go out tonight; I am getting old, and I have had a long, hard day of it, and I must get some rest. Who's sick, anyway, and what is the matter?"

"Now, Doc, you be gittin' yer things on, an' grabbin' yer medicine case an' tools, an' I'll tell yer all about it. Joe Gould's Bessie, on Sheep island, is mighty sick, an' I guess it's diphtery or noomony, an' yer wanted pretty bad an' mighty quick."

"Still Gott, are you crazy? It would be bad enough to ask me to start out a night like this for Bartlett's Neck or Mussell Point, but as for going over to Sheep island in this storm, I can't and I won't. So you might as well go back. It may sound hard-hearted to you, but there is a limit to human endurance and to the risks I am obliged to take for other people, and this is asking too much. Sorry, Still, but I can't do it."

"Doc, you jest listen ter me er minit, an' yer'll change yer mind. Probably when yer wuz young an' fust startin' out practisin', yer may hev thought only uv ther money yer wuz goin' ter make an' yer own comfort, but I've watched yer er good many years, an' I know that fer er-bout that same length uv time yer've been think-

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in' uv gittin' people well fust, an' yer pay next. Er doctor's not his own boss. He's er servant uv ther sufferin' an' ther needy, an' when yer called, it's yer duty ter go jest as much ez it would be mine ef er war broke out, ter shoulder er gun an' go an' fight. That's all there is ter it, an' yer goin'."

"I will not go," said the doctor, as with heightened color he walked rapidly up and down the room.

"Doc, I've been across once ternight, an' I ain't dead yit. An' if you an' I git drowned goin' back ter ther island, all I've got ter say is that we've got to die some time, an' we couldn't die no better way than tryin' ter save ther life uv er little girl. We may not git our names in ther papers ez heroes, er wear any medals, if anythin' should happen ter us, but in the big book above our names will be writ in large print. Now we've wasted time enough, an' I'm goin' ter say jest one thing more ter yer. It may sound tough an' ez if I wuz ugly an' put out with yer, but, Doc, git yer things on an' git ready in erbout er minit, fer as God Almighty hears me speak, an' as I expect some day ter stand before Him an' answer

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fer all my doin's in this world, you're goin' ter Sheep island with me ternight, willin' or not will-in', if I hev ter knock yer down, tie yer, an' carry yer on my back. You can take your choice, dyin' on ther road, or dyin' here, fer go yer shall."

The doctor looked into the blazing eyes of Still, turned pale, and said in a low voice, "I'll go, Still, I might as well, for I know you mean what you say. It is against my best judgment and against my wishes, but I realize that you are desperate at this moment, and I must go."

Putting on his overcoat, hat and gloves, the doctor took his medicine case and walked with Still out to the pung. Still put the doctor in the bottom of the pung, covered him with all the robes and blankets except one that he kept for himself, and the journey back to Allan Carter's was accomplished in a much shorter time than it had taken Still to reach the doctor's house, for the snow had ceased falling and the roads had been somewhat broken by the previous journey.

After the horse and pung had been returned to the barn, the doctor, Allan and Still walked down to the shore and proceeded to get Allan Carter's dory ready for the journey to the island.

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The weather had cleared, and it was fast growing colder, but the wind had not diminished any, and the angry waves as they dashed against the rocks and threw themselves in a white foam into the air did not encourage the doctor or make him feel any more inclined to take the journey. But when he looked up at Still in a questioning way, the stern look he received in return convinced him that any argument would be useless, and he held his peace.

The moon looked down on them in calm indifference, the countless stars twinkled as though opening their eyes in wonder at men daring to tempt fate on such a night, and Dark mountain, now white with snow, seemed to the frightened physician a gigantic tombstone standing at the head of their watery grave. The journey to the island was one long struggle against the elements, and once the doctor in his fright cried out, "Turn back, Still, quick. We're gone."

"No, Doc," was the reply, "we ain't gone, we're only goin'. An' we're goin' ter ther island, an' nowhere else, if ther Lord will let us, an' we ain't gone till He says so."

From that moment until the bleak shore of

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the island was reached the trip was accomplished in silence, save for the roaring of the wind and the hissing of the waves as they beat against the boat, as though angry because two lives were escaping from their remorseless grasp. A landing was made, the boat hauled up into a place of safety, and soon the men were knocking at Joe's door. "Here he is, Joe, here he is. Now, Doc, I've done my duty, an' you do your'n. Don't want no thanks, Joe; if Bessie gits well that's pay enough fer me."

And before anything could be said by the thankful father of the child Still had gone out into the storm on his way to his lonely cabin, not even a thought of having done anything extraordinary occurring to him.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Davenport's father and mother upon receiving the news of his engagement to Elinor had written her letters of kindly congratulation, the mother's being full of hope that the couple would be very happy, and without actually using words to that effect, yet to all intents and purposes saying that she hoped Elinor would appreciate the prize she had got, and would be able in time to grow to the position that the wife of her son should occupy. It concluded with a polite invitation to visit her in New York. The letter of the father was typewritten on a sheet of his business paper, and was as follows:—

New York City, N. Y.

Miss Elinor Day:

Dear Miss:—Have just received letter from my son under date of Monday last, and note

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among the contents that he is engaged to be married, your name being given as that of the young lady of his choice.

Can simply state that being my son, he has therefore been properly educated, and has selected the law as a profession, although up to the time of writing has apparently not progressed to any extent beyond the matter of selection. Trust that you will be able to induce him to give more time to his studies than I have been able to.

As regards his ability to support a wife, would say that he is my only son, and therefore I can guarantee his future in that respect. On this point would respectfully refer you to either Bradstreet's or Dunn's Reports, or will make detailed statement to you personally.

Mrs. Davenport will probably write you at more length, the matter of engagements of our children being more in her line.

Yours respectfully,

John F. Davenport.

Dictated.

All of the young people in the town had also

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congratulated her on her engagement, and all these things would have made her very happy could her mind have been free from the fear that she had made a mistake. But there was no use of considering that now. She had made the sacrifice, she could only hope that the reward would be as great.

In addition to the hope expressed in Mrs. Davenport's congratulatory letter that she would be able to pay them a visit, she had received a formal invitation to do so, and for a month past had heard nothing from her mother but joyful remarks about her good luck and how thankful she ought to be that she had listened to her mother and been governed by her superior wisdom.

And now the day had arrived for her departure, and the stage driver having deposited her trunk on the rack at the rear of the stage, stood talking with her father while she bade her mother good-bye. She had never been away from home over night before, and it seemed to the girl as though she was going away forever.

She clung to her mother and kissed her again and again, while the ambitious woman patted

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her and endeavored to reassure her. "Now, Elinor," she said, "don't you be frightened er worried one mite. You may not hev so many good clothes ez some uv ther folks you'll meet, although no girl ever left the village any better fitted out, fer Nancy Slocum, who's made ev'ry decent dress that's ever been made in Bartlett fer ther last fifteen years, told me so with her own lips. But one thing's certain, you know yer manners all right, onless yer fergit all I've told yer, an' you come uv ther best stock in New England. One uv my folks on mother's side come over in ther Mayflower, an' ef they claim their folks were over here any earlier'n that, then all I've got ter say is they're either stretchin' ther truth er else there's Injun blood in 'em.

"You jest act natchrul, an' ef you don't please 'em it'll be because they don't know er well brought up girl when they see one. I've run ther town of Bartlett more er less fer I dunno how many years, an' I guess ef you've got any uv my spunk they won't put on yer much. You'd better write ter me once in er while, ez I don't suppose there'll be er single thing in ther county paper erbout it, although I sent word ter ther

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editor over er week ergo sayin' you wuz goin'. Good-bye. Father'll take care uv yer till yer well on yer way."

And then Elinor and her father climbed into the stage and the journey was begun. Mr. Day had decided to accompany his daughter as far as Boston and see her safely started for New York, where Davenport was to meet her. He had said next to nothing to his daughter during the week of preparation for the coming event; he rarely did when her mother was present. But daily there had been a reassuring nod or a kindly look which made Elinor know that no matter what might happen she could count upon her father's aid and sympathy if ever a clash in opinions should arise between herself and her mother.

The journey to the steamboat wharf was soon accomplished, the only change from previous ones taken with her father when she had accompanied him to the village being that the front windows of almost every house which they passed were ornamented with the faces of friends, young and old, who by waves of hands wished her good luck and happiness on her great journey into the world.

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The wharf was reached and the two travellers went aboard the steamer, and after depositing their wraps in Elinor's stateroom, the father led the way to the stern of the boat, and sitting down said, "Elinor, now that we hev got under way, and your mother ain't here ter interrupt, I want ter hev er plain talk with yer an' tell yer what I think erbout this matter. I don't want yer ter think I'm goin' ter say one word ergainst yer mother, 'cause I ain't. I couldn't hev er better wife then she's been ter me, an' ef I wuz goin' ter begin all over ergin, I should try ter git her jist ez hard ez I did forty years ergo. She's ther smartest woman in Bartlett, but there ain't no use shettin' our eyes ter ther fact that sometimes she's jest er leetle too smart fer her own peace uv mind. She wuzn't born ter play no second fiddle ter no one, an' what's more she never hez. But it strikes me that once in er while it's jest ez restful ter let some one else do ther playin' while you do ther listenin', an' I guess I've done more listenin' than playin'. Yer mother an' me never hed no words 'n all our life. Sometimes I hain't agreed with her, but when I see that she wuz sot on doin' er thing I've jest

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let her hev her head an' go it, jest ez long ez it didn't interfere with my runnin' ther farm. Ef it hed ever got to that point, I sort uv imagine I sh'd sot my foot down, an' what's more sot it down middlin' hard.

"There's no denyin' too that er woman's fergot more about love than er man will ever know, but when yer start ter put love one-side an' simply make er bargain, then it's fair ter guess er man can make er sharper one. Now I don't like lookin' on marriage ez er trade, yer mother notwithstanding, an' so I've hed this leetle talk with yer so's yer could understand how I felt erbout it. So yer do jest ez yer hev er mind ter. Ef yer hev him, well an' good; an' ef yer make up yer mind bimeby that yer don't want him, let him go, ez long ez yer do it fairly an' honestly, an' I'll stan' by yer through thick an' thin. An' whatever yer do, go slow an' make up yer mind carefully an' then yer'll be all right."

It was the first time in all her life that her father had talked freely with her and perhaps for the reason that never before had he had the opportunity. She had known that her father loved her, for he had never used an unkind word

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towards her; but his heart had never been opened to her, and she had never realized the depths of his feelings towards her. She had been acquainted with him all her life, but now she knew him, knew that if ever the time came when she and her mother differed, he would not interfere until she felt that she was being defeated in a righteous cause, and then he would be a stone wall behind which she could retreat and be in safety.

The next morning Mr. Day and Elinor arrived in Boston, and after a brief rest her father placed her on the cars for New York. The old man sat in the seat with her for a few moments, and then the engine bell began to sound the warning of departure. The father leaned down and kissed the upturned face of his daughter and said, "Good-bye, little girl; hold up yer head jest ez high ez any uv 'em, an' when yer git sick an' tired uv 'em, remember there's er home down in Bartlett where they'll never be tired uv yer ther longest day yer live. It'll seem sort uv cloudy down there till yer bring ther sunshine back. Good-bye," and he turned away and left the car, but he lingered beneath the window at

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her seat until the too impatient train drew out of the station and out of his sight.

Each mile the train sped on seemed to the girl to be taking her farther away from all she had in the world, instead of nearer to an impatient and joyous lover, and when the train reached the approaches to New York and plunged into the intense blackness of the long tunnel, it seemed to the traveller as though she heard the clang of the prison doors behind her, and that she was never to emerge until the time should come to leave this world for another and better one. The train finally came to a stop, and she followed slowly along behind the rest of the passengers, who to her mind must all have been travelling on some matter of life and death, judging by the rush and scramble to get out of the car.

The noise and confusion was appalling. At Bartlett she had seen perhaps a dozen people leave the boat or go on board when the steamer arrived, accompanied only by the slight noise of the deck hands wheeling a few truck loads of trunks and merchandise to or from the wharf. But here Bedlam was apparently let loose. The

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sound of escaping steam, the ringing of bells and the unintelligible cries of a drove of cabmen dismayed her. As she looked around, wondering what she should do or where she should go, if Davenport should fail to find her in that immense throng of half-crazed people, a voice said, "Here you are, after all. By Jove, Elinor, I began to be frightened lest you had not come. I watched the people get out of all the parlor cars, and really I never dreamed of looking down at this end of the train. I was about to go when I saw you. Lucky, wasn't it? Give me your check and we will go along," and then he escorted her through the crowd along the station, and finally turned through a side door to a carriage, at the door of which stood a young man attired in a long coat and a regulation coachman's hat.

"Home, James," he said, as he assisted Elinor into the carriage.

"That sounds like home, Harry," said the girl, as she turned toward her beaming lover; "you know down home we all call the stage driver 'Horace.' He is an old friend of every person in the town."

The only reply she received was a roar of

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laughter from Davenport.

"Why, Harry," inquired the amazed girl, "what are you laughing at?"

"Elinor," replied Harry, "if James had heard you call him a stage driver or compare him with one he would have dropped dead, then and there. He is father's private coachman, and always appears as though he thought he was conferring a great favor on the family by condescending to drive the carriage. I won't tell it to him now, but after you have returned home, I'll break it to him gently and see if he won't be inclined to look on the family thereafter a little more favorably. I think it will do him a heap of good. By the way, I am awfully glad you got here as soon as you did, as mother informed me this afternoon that she was going to give a series of dinner parties in your honor, and that the first one was to be pulled off this evening. Awful bore, but of course the mater wants to do the thing in shape and so I don't object. Rather have you all to myself, you know. Thought I would just give you the tip so that you would know what was coming this evening."

The carriage drew up to the door of Daven-

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port's home and Harry, leaping out, ushered the loved one into the house. As they walked into the reception room, a tall, silver-haired woman, faultlessly attired, stepped forward and said, "My dear girl, I am glad to see you in our home and Harry's home. You are very welcome, and I know even now that my son has made no mistake in his choice."

And then a stout, clean-shaven man with an eye like a hawk came up and said, "Glad to see you, Miss Day. Glad to see any one from Maine. Born there myself down near Wiscasset. Changed some, I imagine, since I left there forty odd years ago. Always have intended to take a run down there again, if I ever get time."

"And now, Elinor, if you will let me call you so," said Mrs. Davenport, "perhaps I will ring for your maid and you can go to your room, as I presume you may want to rest a few moments before dinner."

The girl followed the servant up the stairs to the room which had been set aside for her, and for a few moments was alone. The hardest thing, the meeting of Harry's parents, had been successfully encountered, and after bathing her

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face and removing the stains of travel, she unlocked her trunk which had been placed in the room, and taking out her dresses, carefully shook the creases out of them and hung them in the closet. She had about emptied the contents of the trunk and placed the numerous articles where she wanted them, when there was a rap at the door. As she opened it, the maid who had accompanied her to the room stepped in and said, "Beg pardon, miss, but I thought you would like to have me unpack your trunk before dinner and assist you in dressing."

"Oh, I thank you very much," replied Elinor, "but you see I have got the trunk all unpacked, and I never had anyone help me in dressing since I was a little girl. It's very kind of you, I am sure, but I won't trouble you," and Elinor proceeded to pick out one of her few dresses which she thought would be suitable for a party, while the maid with a smile on her face returned to other duties.

The dress which she picked out was a pretty white muslin with a knot of blue ribbon here and there, and had been regarded in Bartlett by the favored few who had seen it as the crowu-

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ing point in the dressmaking life of Nancy Slocum. She went slowly down the stairs wondering how her clothes would compare with those of the people whom she was about to meet, for she was a woman, and found the Davenport family in the drawing room. The two men were naturally attired in what the people in Bartlett would have called "claw hammer coats," and Mrs. Davenport, to the eyes of the young girl, was arrayed like Solomon in all his glory. She felt that the woman was surveying her critically, but the men she realized could not have told the next moment whether she was attired in silk or calico, for the elder one was thinking of the possible condition of the stock market the next day, and the younger one was in love, and "love is blind."

The guests whom she was to meet, were friends of Mr. and Mrs. Davenport rather than of Harry, and Elinor, therefore, expected to see a number of old ladies and gentlemen soberly attired. But as the ladies entered the room after removing their wraps, Elinor was positively shocked at their scantiness of attire above the waist. If any one woman, to say nothing of a

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dozen, had appeared in Bartlett with such a lack of clothing she would have been driven into the bay by such of the populace as had breath enough left to enable them to run.

She looked around the room, but she saw no one blushing or seeming to be disturbed, and therefore in a few moments she regained her composure, and then the party went to the dining room, where Elinor encountered food as foreign in taste as in name. All this was very strange and unusual to the girl, but she had got through it bravely until the first of the wine was brought to the table. She quietly declined having any, and Mr. Davenport noticing the fact said pleasantly, "I see, Miss Day, that you have brought your State of Maine principles with you."

"Why, are such principles confined to the State of Maine, sir?"

"No, not necessarily. I believe there are several States where they endeavor to legislate liquor away from people, although as far as I know, the only result has been to cause one to go farther for it, pay a larger price, and get a much poorer quality. I propose to have some of

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the good things of life myself, and not let the other fellow get them all. However, you do as you please. What you don't want, don't have; and what you do want, I will guarantee you shall have, if it is in my power to get it for you."

He spoke so pleasantly and kindly to the girl that she mentally thanked him for making it so easy to do what she wished. The guests also had a pleasant word for her, and before the dinner was half concluded Elinor felt as much at ease as if she had been in her own home. The hours flew by in mirth and conversation, and finally one by one the guests departed and at length Elinor went to her room. The clock on the mantle was striking the hour, and she counted the strokes of the bell. Twelve o'clock! Where had the evening gone? Saturday night too, and she must be awake early in the morning in order to be in time for church. The light was extinguished, and soon the tired maiden was asleep dreaming of Bartlett and home.

The morning light stole into her room, and she saw in a moment by looking at the clock that she had naturally overslept. It was half-past seven! What would they think of her?

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The very thought that they were waiting for her at the breakfast table caused her to spring out of bed, and hurriedly dress and descend the stairs.

She went into the dining room an excuse on her lips, but there was no one there and the curtains were still drawn. Going into the library, she seated herself and, taking a book, began reading. Deeply engrossed in the story, she did not know anyone had entered the room, until a voice said:

“Are you troubled with insomnia, Elinor, or did the fact that you were in a strange house cause you to awake early?”

She looked up and Mrs. Davenport was standing before her. She arose from her chair and replied, “Oh, no, not at all. In fact, I overslept, as I was very tired and imagined I had been causing you to wait for me. It was eight o’clock when I came down, and I was very glad to know that I was ahead of time rather than behind. I omitted to ask you last night your breakfast hour.”

“Why, my dear girl,” said the elder woman, “you should have remained abed until you heard

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the bell. We breakfast at nine, Sundays."

The other members of the family entered the room at this moment, and soon they were seated at the breakfast table. At home Elinor had been accustomed to see her father and mother breakfast in somewhat of a hurry, and she was surprised at the leisurely way the Davenports proceeded. She looked at the clock two or three times, until finally Harry noticing her glances asked, "What is on your mind, Elinor? Not going anywhere in particular, are you?"

"I was simply noticing the time, and wondering how much time I would have to dress for church."

"Church!" replied Harry; "why, we never go to church. That is, not very often. If there is a special preacher we go. I believe the governor owns a pew, and pays his assessments regularly for his share of the annual church debt. Mother goes quite often, I believe, but father reads the papers and magazines, and I generally read, go to sleep again, or play golf, unless I am away yachting. Generally try to get away somewhere over Sunday. Long, stupid day, take it all together."

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"Would you like to go to church, Elinor?" asked Mrs. Davenport. "I am afraid it is a little late now for this morning's service. Is there any particular church you would like to go to?"

"No, I don't know where to go. If I were choosing for myself I should probably go to a Baptist church, but I will go wherever you wish."

"Baptist!" ejaculated Harry. "Great Scot! I doubt if one of us knows where there is one in the whole city. I should think you would want a change, Elinor, from the regulation thing. Why, when I was in Bartlett, I went with you, you know, and if the service there was a sample, it was exceedingly slow. Short prayer, hymn, Bible reading, long prayer, hymn, sermon, hymn, benediction.

"I would suggest that either you go to a high Episcopal, where you get something spectacular, candle, incense, acolytes with red robes, boy choir, banners and all that, or else go to the Unitarian, where you can hear some swell singing and a sermon that is up to the times. Why, do you know, I was talking with the minister down there one day, and as far as I could find out he didn't believe in wine, cards, theatre, dancing

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at all, or going yachting or playing golf Sundays. Rather gloomy religion, it seems to me. But of course Elinor will drop all that when she comes to live in New York.

“The old puritanical idea seems to prevail in Bartlett. You must mortify the flesh all the time in order to be in a proper state of mind. Their idea is that the Saviour was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and therefore we must never smile, but reflect constantly on our unworthiness and all that sort of thing. Now, it seems to me that is the wrong way to look at it. Of course, considering what He had to endure and was enduring He could not always wear a smile, but I never saw a picture of Him where the artist gave him a tearful look. It was rather a sweet face of one who could understand all moods, and sympathize with all phases of life. It strikes me that they are all wrong in Bartlett in regard to religion”

Mr. Davenport had noticed a troubled look on Elinor's face while Harry was speaking, and turning to his son he said in a tone of reproof, “Harry, I think, if you please, we will not discuss the dangerous topic of religion. It strikes

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me that the question is not so much where you go or the form of service, as the spirit in which you go. To be sure, I don't go much, but all the religion I got when a boy in one of your slow churches, as you term them, down in Maine, never harmed me. On the other hand, the impression that old-fashioned style of religion made upon me has never been entirely effaced, and whatever good there is in me today is the result of it."

"Beg pardon, Elinor and father. I meant no harm, you know," replied the young man. "I would only be too pleased to go to any church you wish, Elinor, as it really makes no difference to me. I did not intend to make any odious comparisons, only, of course, the people in Bartlett do just as their fathers did before them, while we have progressed. We are just as religious, you know, but we take a broader view of life."

The whole conversation had been a painful surprise to Elinor. She had known that her lover had been born and had always lived in a different atmosphere from the one in which she had lived, as far removed as the stars from the

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earth, but she had never considered the distance between them, nor exchanged views with him in regard to life. And for the rest of the day she could not drive out of her mind, try as hard as she could, the thought that the time must come when one of them must yield, and in yielding be unhappy.

Monday came, and the week of pleasure as planned by the devoted lover, began. It was a series of arising late, sitting in the house or driving during the forenoon, visiting places of interest in the afternoon, and going to the theatres or entertaining friends in the evening until the small hours of the morning. Whenever Elinor remonstrated at her lover's neglect of his studies, his reply was, "Oh, well, never mind my studies. If I never study it will be all right. It's a confounded bore anyway. Plenty of time for law. I shall probably never practice. All I want to know is enough to look after my own property. There is no use working if you can afford to do otherwise. 'Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow ye die,' is my motto."

Again the journey to Boston and thence to Bartlett was taken, and soon she was clasped in

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her mother's arms. The friends who had come to greet Elinor upon her return had departed and the family were alone.

"Elinor," said the mother, "I thought I should burst while ther Romers an' ther rest uv 'em wuz here er settin' 'round, but now they've gone, I'd like ter ask yer one question before you tell us erbout yer trip. Hev they got as much money ez yer Uncle Samuel wrote they hed?"

"Why, mother," replied the girl, "I don't know how much money they have. I didn't go to New York to find that out. All I know is they keep a number of horses, four hired girls and two men, and live in a magnificent house. They have everything they want, and apparently do not care what a thing costs, provided they have decided to have it. But I don't want to discuss their money, please."

"H'm, well, mebbe you don't, but I do. Some people can run quite er rig on plaguey little, an' I want ter be sure. That's what I let yer go for, ter find out. Ez fer ez ther horses are concerned that don't mean much, 'specially ef they raise their own hay; but four hired girls! Are yer sure they keep four? What on earth

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they find ter do, I dunno. Four—hired—girls! Elinor, they've got money, there's no doubt erbout it. Well, thank Heaven, you won't hev ter raise yer own han's when yer married. An' ter think, Stephen, it's our Elinor that's come inter sech luck. I hope I'll be able ter go an' see her once before I die an' see four hired girls in one house. I 'spose, Elinor, Mrs. Davenport don't do nothin' in ther kitchen 'cept ther cake, does she?"

"Why, mother," laughed Elinor, "she never goes into the kitchen. She simply orders what she wants for breakfast or dinner, and then dismisses the whole affair from her mind."

"Well, I dunno erbout that way," replied Mrs. Day, doubtfully; "seems ter me that er good housekeeper ort ter keep an eye on things better'n that. I don't doubt er word you say, Elinor, but it seems more like er dream. Four—hired—girls!"

For days Elinor was kept busy answering the questions of her mother, who did not seem so interested in the story of the objects of interest which her daughter had seen, as in the description of the Davenport home and other informa-

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tion which gave an idea of their wealth. And when Elinor showed her mother her engagement ring, and said that she imagined it must have cost two hundred dollars, judging from the prices of others she had seen in the jewelry stores, then Mrs. Day was fully satisfied and ceased questioning her daughter, devoting all of her spare moments to repeating to the neighbors who called all that Elinor had told her.

Mrs. Day was supremely happy. She not only was the first woman in Bartlett, but now she was the most envied. But Elinor for the first time in her life was unhappy. Each day she knew she was approaching the time when she would leave Bartlett and begin a new life in New York. When Davenport had asked her to promise to be his wife, she had consented, hoping that time would prove that she was mistaken in her ideas; but the week spent in New York had only served to confirm her fears. If she had not known that her father was ready to come to her assistance, she would never have dared to resist the disappointment and possible anger of her mother, but with him to flee to, with his love to strengthen her, she mustered

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her courage in battle array and decided to prevent the horrible mistake from growing any larger, and save two people from a life-long sorrow. It was better for both Harry and herself to live lives of single blessedness rather than one of double accursedness.

Having decided what was right to do as well as sensible, she decided to wait no longer, and therefore wrote Harry a letter over which she spent many an unhappy moment and shed many tears.

“Dear Harry,” she wrote, “several years ago a lady, who spent the summer in Bartlett, gave me an Episcopal prayer book and asked me to read it. I must confess I never read much of it, for somehow the prayers in it seemed like manufactured ones to me, accustomed as I was to hear all prayers made on the instant rather than repeated from a book. But, like all girls, I read the marriage service, and young as I was it made a deep impression upon my mind and heart, and for the first time I realized that marriage was something more than two people deciding to live together as man and wife, and having a minister say a few words over them.

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The service in that book began by saying that 'marriage was not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God.' My dear friend, remembering these words I have decided I cannot marry you. The words I have just written have caused me more sorrow and pain than any I have ever written or spoken before in all my life, and more, much more than I wish you to ever suffer.

"I know you are a good man, honest and true; I believe that if I became your wife you would do all in your power to make me happy. But you must not change your whole life for my sake; you could not if you would, and I doubt if you would if you could. Seeing everything that goes to make all that is good and best in this world from a different point of view than that from which I behold them, looking upon some things as proper and right which I have been taught to regard as wrong, you could not be expected by me to give up all and settle down to living the life I would desire to live. And, on the other hand, I could not care for a life that consisted of simply having a good

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time, and thinking nothing of the morrow. I am too much like the ant, you, like the butterfly, and those two were never intended to live together. Ants should work together, butterflies flit from flower to flower side by side.

“My illustration perhaps is a poor one; perhaps I am not the industrious, patient, hard-working ant, perhaps I have not given you credit for the many sober thoughts which you may have had or the many hours you may have passed in hard study; but we are wide apart. And while no doubt years of married life, and possibly children, would bring us nearer to one another, we should never be side by side as man and wife should be, with one thought and one desire, the happiness of both as one.

“I know that my decision will be a great disappointment to my friends and a means of causing you sorrow and pain, but it is best for us both. Better an hour of sorrow than a lifetime of vain regrets.

“I believe that you will receive this letter in the spirit in which it is written; I know that you will believe me when I say that I have considered this matter for weeks. If I loved you, I

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would go with you and live in the poorest place in the world and be happy. But I don't love you, I never can, and therefore even New York with all that it contains to make life happy would only be a prison for me. I admire you, I respect you, but I cannot be your wife, and therefore let us stop where we are, good friends, and I hope always good friends. Elinor."

She read the letter over slowly and carefully, and then placing it in an envelope laid it on the desk, while she enclosed her first and only ring in a package to be sent to Harry by express.

Taking the two articles, she walked downstairs into the front room where her mother and father were sitting, Mrs. Day busily engaged in sewing, while the honest old farmer was reading an article in the county paper.

"Mother and father," she said, as with heightened color she turned towards them, "I have written a letter to Harry in which I tell him I must break our engagement. I have written the letter because I believe it was the best thing and the right thing to do. It has been a very unpleasant experience; please do not make it any harder for me by asking me any questions about

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it, or making any comments," and turning she left the room.

When she returned from the post-office and entered the room, she knew in an instant from the grim, set look on the face of her father and the tearful countenance of her mother that Stephen Day had spoken, and that the lioness was silent in the presence of her mate.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The spring came, and one morning as Still was ploughing in the little field back of his house, he noticed two men drive up to his door, get out of the buggy, hitch the horse and walk toward him over the ploughed land. Still stopped his horse and awaited their coming.

“Wonder who they are, an’ what they want? Ef they’re lightnin’ agents I shan’t want ’em, fer lightnin’ struck ther house last summer, an’ goin’ on ther principle thet it don’t hit ther same place twice, ’twould be flyin’ in ther face uv Providence to put up any rods now. Ef they’re book agents, then ez for books, I’ve got er Bible, Fox’s Book uv Martyrs, Pilgrim’s Progress an’ er book uv travels, an’ I guess that’s bein’ fitted out pooty well. Them an’ ther county paper keep me er goin’.”

The men approached, and one of them said: “This is Mr. Gott, I presume?”

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"Well," said Still, "you needn't guess ergin. That's what I'm called, an' what I answer to. What kin I do fer yer?"

"Well, Mr. Gott, we were going by, and hap-pening to remember that we had heard that you owned a little wood lot on Sheep island, thought we would inquire if it was for sale. We are buying a few wood lots around here, intending to cut and ship kiln wood to Rockland."

"Yes, I sec. Now 'tween you an' me, I guess that lot won't be uv no use ter yer. I cut most uv ther wood off last winter. It's only er fifty acre lot anyway, an' mostly ledges."

"Is that so? Well, I am surprised. We were over on the island a few days ago, and had some of the different lots pointed out to us by the man who carried us over. He must have made a mistake in the ownership of the lot he pointed out."

"Jest like ez not. Who took yer over?"

"Haskell Peters."

"Well, ef he p'inted that lot out, no wonder yer got mixed up. Haskell's er good, hard work-in' feller, but when they wuz dealin' out brains he didn't get round till late. 'Tween you an'

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me, he hardly knows ernuff ter go in when it rains, er chew gum without er string. Why, I remember when he wuz erbout twenty-one, one day his father, who wuz er brisk, forehanded sort uv er farmer, wuz talkin' with me erbout crops an' things out in his barn, an' Haskell came in an' stood 'round listenin'. Pooty soon ther old man turned on Haskell an' sez he, 'Haskell, yer hain't done nothin' since yer quit goin' ter school but set 'round an' chaw terbacker, while I've been workin' tight ez I could jump. I guess it's gone erbout fur ernuff. Haskell, I hate ter say what I'm goin' ter, to my own flesh an' blood, but unless yer make er big change in yer style an' git down ter work, you an' me must part.' An' Haskell, he spit out er whole mouthful uv terbacker juice, an' sez he, 'Well, now, father, I'd hate like blazes ter hev you leave home.' No, Haskell ain't reel up an' comin'."

"But you own a lot on the island of fifty acres, I understand."

"Yes, that's right. That's ther gen'ral understandin'."

"And it is for sale?"

"Yes, anything I've got is fer sale, 'cept my

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dog an' ther mare, providin' I kin git my price."

"What is your price for that lot?"

"Dunno ez I hev any. I hedn't thought much uv sellin' it. In fact, I dunno ez ther idee ever entered my head."

"What would you consider a fair price for it?"

"Whatever I sold it fer I should think wuz erbout right."

"But, Mr. Gott, we want some idea to go by. If we knew what you asked for it, we could quickly say whether we would give that amount or not, and if we thought the price too high, we could then make a counter offer."

"Yes, that's so, I guess. But ther fust offer better come frum you."

"What do you say to one hundred and fifty dollars. That's three dollars an acre."

"Well, I won't say much. I tell yer short an' sweet, I won't take it."

"Will you take three hundred dollars?"

"No, nur three thousand dollars," was the surprising answer.

The two men looked at one another for a few moments, and then the spokesman of the two strangers said in a tone of surprise:

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“Why, Mr. Gott, you take my breath away.”

“Do, eh? Well, keep quiet er minute, then. There’s er strong breeze blowin’ an’ ef yer face it, you’ll git some more soon. If yer feel kind uv faint, I’ll run an’ git ther camphor bottle.”

The other man, who, up to this time, had maintained silence, then turned to Still and said: “Mr. Gott, why do you place such an outrageous price on that little wood lot?”

“Now,” replied Still, “we’re gittin’ down ter bizness. ’Taint an outrageous price, an’ I hain’t said yet I’d take that fer it. I only said I wouldn’t take that fer it. But I guess that’s ther question that calls fer ther whole story. Gentlemen, last winter, when I wuz on ther isl- and on that lot choppin’, one day I see er feller up on ther ledges fussin’ ’round. I didn’t say nothin’ to him at fust, nor let on I wuz er watch- in’ him, but I wuz, jest ther same, an’ I seen him knockin’ off pieces of rock an’ puttin’ em in er little bag. I sh’d think he covered acres uv thet ledge knockin’ off pieces wherever it stuck out uv ther ground, an’ I covered about ez much ground as he did er watchin’ him. When he’d got erbout through, I came up ter him an’

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asked him what he wuz doin'. He said he wuz jest takin' bits uv rocks here an' there, an' said somethin' erbout geolergy. He geed fast ernuff when he see me. 'Thinks I, somethin' is up, an' this spring I took some uv that rock myself an' sent it t' er man in Boston what Squire Eaton told me erbout, an' he sent word back an' asked me how much uv it I hed. I sent him word that ez fer ez I could jedge, I hed acres uv it; in fact, that stone wuz ther bigges' crop I raised on my place. An' then he sent me word thet that stone wuz er mighty fine kind uv granite an' wuth er pile uv money. So I been waitin' ever since, watchin' ter see how ther cat would jump, an' I guess she's jumped. At any rate, she's feelin' frisky. Now yer've got my whole story, an' if yer've got anythin' ter say, why, say it, an' I'll meet yer half way. I'm lookin' fer ther best price I can get. I'm er good deal like an old Irishman that lived 'round here years ago. Dead an' gone now. Well, one day he wuz tryin' ter sell an old hoss he had, an' er feller wuz lookin' ther hoss over, an' sez he: 'This hoss looks ez if he hed ther heaves. Hez he got 'em?' An' ther old Irishman sez: 'Ther

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heaves? What's ther heaves? I'll tell yer one thin', if he's any ther better fer havin' 'em, he's got 'em."

"Mr. Gott, it is very apparent to us that we have got a smart business man to deal with. We will admit that as far as can be judged from the surface, without going to the expense of blasting off a lot of the stone, there is a fair quality of granite on that lot. It may prove better, and it may prove to be utterly useless when we get down a few feet. I simply state these facts to let you see that outside appearances may be deceitful, and that we should be allowed some margin if we purchase the property and take the chances."

"Well, gentlemen, now that we've come down ter business, I'll tell yer what I'll do, an' we won't dicker any more. I wuz jest kind uv jok-in' yer on ther start ter see what you'd say, but now I'll make you er price, an' it's ther price I'll take, an' I won't take one cent less. My price fer ther fifty-acre lot is twenty-five thousand dollars, cold cash, an' when I git that, yer can cut kiln wood, dig granite, er raise clams on ther shore, fer all uv me."

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“Mr. Gott, it seems to me that you are inclined to drive a pretty sharp bargain, and we are not prepared to accept or refuse your offer today, but will you be willing to give us the refusal of the lot for a week? We can certainly let you know our decision by that time.”

“Sharp bargain, eh?” replied Still; “well, now it may be sharp, but I swanny, it ain’t ez sharp ez ther bargain old Dr. Smith’s wife drove with Simeon Robinson. Yer see Simeon sort uv lived frum hand ter mouth, doin’ odd jobs fer neighbors, mowin’, plantin’, cuttin’ wood an’ so on. One day he stopped at ther doctor’s house an’ asked Mrs. Smith ef she had any work she wanted done. Well, she took him out back uv ther house and showed him er pile uv ther worst wood Simeon ever see in all his life. It wuz er lot uv spruce, an’ looked like ther off-scourin’ uv ther earth. All twisted up an’ full uv knots an’ pitch. Well, it wuz hotter’n blazes that day, an’ Simeon knew he hed er tough job before him, an’ he thought it over, an’ finally he said he’d do it fer er dollar. Well, they backed an’ filled fer er while, an’ finally Mrs. Smith beat him down ter fifty cents. It wuz an awful low price, but Sim-

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eon needed ther money an' so he started in. He worked all day, an' like ter died with ther heat, an' what wuz worse, she didn't even ask him in ter dinner; but finally jest before sundown he got it done. He went up an' rapped on ther back door, an' when Mrs. Smith came out, he sez: 'Mrs. Smith, I've got it done.' An' sez she, 'Well, now, that's all right. Now ez ter payin' yer, I hain't got no change ter pay yer with, 'cause money is pretty scarce, but, uv course, yer'll be willin' ter swop work. So you come round most any day, an' ther doctor'll pull er tooth fer yer.' Now, ez ter ther refusal, you kin hev ther refusal on one understandin'. Whether we come to terms er not, an' especially ef we do, I want yer to agree that nobody but yourselves shall ever know about our talk terday."

"Very well, sir, we agree to that, and we bid you good-day," and the two men went back to their buggy and drove away.

"Well, old girl," said Still as he again picked up the reins, "we may possibly be wuth er pile uv money, but nabobs er no nabobs, we've got this ploughin' ter do. They say money makes ther mare go, an' I guess I'll see what effect it

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hez on yer. Git up."

And the old mare slowly started up, dragging the plough behind her with Still hanging to the handles.

A week later, the same two men called upon Still, a deed was given of the land, and Still was handed a certified check for twenty-five thousand dollars in the presence of 'Squire Eaton, who acted as adviser for him.

After the purchasers had withdrawn from the attorney's office, Still handed the check to 'Squire Eaton and instructed him as follows: "Jedge, yer go up ter Boston ez soon ez yer can, git ther money that piece uv paper calls fer, invest in some good stocks an' bonds, an' bring 'em back an' keep 'em in yer safe er some other good place fer me. An' ez fast ez ther int'rest comes in, pay it over ter me after yer've taken out what's right fer yerself. An' while yer erbout it, take out fer what you've done so fer an' also fer ther trip ter Boston an' back, ez soon ez yer draw ther money frum ther bank. After yer git back, yer kin give me er list uv ther things yer've bought an' er kind uv er receipt so's we'll start square, an' that'll be all settled."

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"But, Still," remonstrated the lawyer, "this is a great responsibility you are putting upon me. The investing of so large a sum of money without any instructions is something that I hesitate about doing. Why not put the check through the nearest bank for collection, and consult the cashier or president of the bank in regard to the investment? Or, what would be better, go to Boston yourself, hunt up some good stock broker, and take his advice."

"Squire, I don't want nobuddy ter know I've got this money, an' ef I take ther check ter er bank 'round here it'll leak out. You lawyers, on ther other hand, are handlin' money all ther time, so yer hevin' ther check won't surprise anybuddy. An' people won't be able ter git anythin' out uv yer erbout it, more'n I wuz able ter find out erbout Dave Hopkins frum Doc Norcross once. I met ther doctor, an' says I, 'How's Dave? Pretty sick, ain't he?' an' says Doc, 'Yes, he is.' An' says I, 'Is he goin' ter git well?' An' Doc Norcross looked at me an' he says, 'Still, inside uv ther next twenty-four hours Dave'll be better, er worse, er remain as he is.'

"Now, I ain't goin' ter change my style

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uv livin' er buy anything new, but I'm goin' ter hang onter it while I live an' use ther income in certain ways, an' that's why I want yer ter run ther whole thing. Ez fer me goin' ter Boston an' buyin' stock, why, Squire, I dunno no more 'bout buyin' stock than ther man in ther moon. Ther only stock I know erbout is stock that hez ter be watered good an' often, an' ef I kin jedge frum what I read in the papers, the stock I want now is ther kind thet hezn't been watered at all, an' what's more, won't need any. You go erhead an' use yer best jedgment, an' ez that's better'n eny I've got, ef yer make er mistake I shan't complain. An' speakin' uv law business, s'pose we pass frum ther grave ter ther gay, ez ther feller said when he left ther cemetery ter call on ther young widder. I've drawed up my will, now I've got somethin' ter leave, an' I want yer ter look it over, patch up any holes yer see in it, an' if it's all tight an' won't leak, I'll hev yer git some witnesses an' we'll launch her terday. I'd like ter leave ther wordin' uv it jest ez I've drawed it, ef it's all right."

The lawyer looked it over carefully, and after

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a few moments of study informed Still that while the will was perhaps slightly informal and not exactly as he would have written it, yet it was a legal will, clearly expressed, and would stand the test of the law. The will was therefore duly signed and witnessed.

"All right then," said Still, "that takes all my business with yer off'n my mind, an' I guess I'll be goin'. Law is er luxury what only ther rich can afford, an' ez I've come inter some property, I'll jest indulge this much. Mornin'."

As soon as he arrived home Still put the wagon in the barn, turned the horse into the pasture and went into the house.

"I guess ez I've got money now, I'll set down ther rest uv this day. Seein' ez I hed more money in my hand terday than I ever expected ter see, an' all my own, an' inezmuch ez I've made my will, I guess that's excitement enough fer one day. I swanny, I dunno whether I'm tickled er sorry. Seems ter me I wuz well enough off before. Hed all I could do ter keep up then, an' now I've got all this money ter spend top uv that. Ef folks in Boston is ez worried erbout how ter get red uv their money ez I shall be after this,

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I pity 'em, that's all I've got ter say. Twenty-five thousand dollars, at four per cent. int'rest, is —lemme see," and getting a piece of paper and a pencil he made a few figures and started up saying:

"Thunderation! It's er thousand dollars er year! Why, that's twice ez much ez ther minster gits! Whew! Le's see. Yes, it's mighty nigh ter three dollars er day, countin' Sundays an' hollerdays. Think uv it! I kin go ter bed at night, an' when I git up in ther mornin' I've got three dollars more'n I hed when I went ter sleep, an' it's er comin' right erlong without my liftin' er finger. Jest ther same ez if I sh'd set on ther front porch ev'ry mornin' er holdin' out my hand, an' somebody sh'd come erlong an' put three dollars in it. Well, well, er fool fer luck they say, an' I guess that wuz pretty nigh true when I sold that ledge on Sheep island."

He was silent for a moment thinking of his wonderful fortune, and then the smile died out of his face and a better, more manly look came into it. He got up from the chair he had been sitting in, and going into his little bedroom knelt by the side of his bed, and, bowing his head

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and closing his eyes, said: "Oh, Lord, there's er great deal more in my heart than I can let out uv my mouth, but I know that you can look inter my heart as well as you can hear what I say. I've got all this money, an' I don't need er red cent uv it; but you must hev hed some reason for bringin' it eround so's I got it, an' that's ernuff fer me. I don't intend ter fritter it erway, ner let anybody cheat me out uv it ef I can help it. An' I don't intend, on ther other hand, ter be stingy with it. Help me ter do ther right thing with it at ther right time. Make me understand and remember ev'ry day that I'm only handlin' this money fer you, an' that I must show how it's all gone when ther time comes. Show me what's my duty, an' give me ther strength ter do it. Amen."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Town meeting day had arrived, and every citizen that had a horse and wagon, or, not having one, could get a chance to ride with a more fortunate neighbor, was present at the town hall. Not for years had there been such a large attendance, and the little town ring that had controlled the offices of the town so long were not only surprised but worried at the large number present. They bustled around greeting each newcomer with a shake of the hand and the regulation office-seeker's smile, and as often as a citizen of the town came in who had not been in the habit of attending the meeting in years past, some one of the ring would ask him, "What brought you out today?" And yet all the answers they got, no matter in what language they were expressed, were very unsatisfactory.

The persons interrogated did not seem to be evading the question in any way; they appeared

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to be telling the truth when they replied that they didn't know as there was any particular reason, except that they had been told by some one that it was their duty to attend the meeting, and they guessed it was. When asked who had reminded them of their duty, some of them named one person, others another.

The "ring" got together a few moments before the meeting was called to order and compared notes, but the mystery was as dark and deep as before. There was nothing to do but await developments, and they began to realize that relying as they did on everything going as they had previously planned, if all these newcomers, these stay-at-homes, were arrayed against them, they were defeated.

The room in the town hall had become so crowded that hardly a seat was vacant, when Squire Eaton, slowly putting on his glasses, called the meeting to order. The call for the meeting was slowly and carefully read by the old lawyer, and the meeting was open for business.

The first matter of business in order was the election of a moderator, and, on motion of Allan Carter, seconded by Abe Merrill, Squire Eaton

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was unanimously elected to that office for the twentieth consecutive time.

The appropriations for the regular running expenses of the town were agreed upon without any opposition, except the appropriation for the schools. At this point there was a slight ripple of excitement when Stephen Herrick arose to oppose the amount proposed to be expended.

"Mr. Moderator," he said, "it's all nonsense spendin' so much money fer schools an' teachers. We can hire teachers fer er good deal less than we're payin', an' ther schoolhouse down on ther Neck that some of the members of this meetin' propose to tear down so's ter build a better one, wuz good ernuff fer me, an' it's good ernuff for my children, or anybuddy else's. There's no use uv us gittin' these highfalutin notions, 'cause it's all nonsense. Taxes is high ernuff now. I'm totally opposed ter this expense, an' I hope ther citizens uv this town have got too much hoss sense ter vote fer it."

As he sat down, there was a feeble attempt at applause, and then good old Dr. Sleeper, the Methodist minister, arose and delivered a long and ponderous speech in regard to the advantages

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of education, and vigorously advocated the measure. He received the recognition that his age and profession entitled him to, and for a moment nobody followed him.

Squire Eaton then said, "Any more remarks on the question?"

At this point, Still arose from his seat amidst a burst of applause, and every one awoke to the occasion. Still never missed a town meeting, but he rarely spoke upon any subject that came before the meeting. But his trial for burning Rhoderick Friend's barn had caused him to be talked about throughout the town, and every man was eager to hear what he might see fit to say.

"Mr. Moderator," he said, "my father used ter hev an' old sayin', which wuz, 'er terrible pile uv hollerin' fer mighty little wool, ez ther devil said when he sheared ther pig,' and it seems ter me ez though we'd hed er good sample uv it terday. Steve Herrick hez made er big cry ergainst ther schools, but without ther slightest reason. It struck me ez kind uv funny when Steve sed that ther school that wuz good ernuff fer him wuz good ernuff fer his children, consid-

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erin' he's been married goin' on thirty years an' hain't got chick nor child, an' what's more, ain't likely ter, unless somebody leaves one on his front porch. But I guess he wuz erbout right after all, come to think uv it. He's got nothin' in ther way uv children, an' ther schoolhouse is jest good fer nothin'. An' when he sed taxes wuz high ernuff now, I thought I should snicker right out in meetin', when I remembered that Steve hain't paid nothin' but er poll tax fer more'n twenty years, an' ain't likely ter fer ther next twenty."

A roar of laughter went up that fairly shook the rafters, and it was some time before the moderator by vigorous rapping with his knife on the table, could bring the meeting to a point where it was possible for Still to continue his remarks.

"Now, Mr. Moderator an' feller citizens," continued Still, "I ain't no college learned man, nor even er graduate uv ther town academy, like some uv yer. I jest went through ther deestriet school, an' then I hed ter go ter work, an' I've hed my nose on ther grindstone an' been turnin' ther handle myself ever since. But what little time I've hed ter spare, I've used in readin' an' listenin'

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ter folks what hez hed er good edjercation, an' I've never met er man yet whose health wuz injured by knowin' too much. Yer all know that ef yer make er pint uv workin', instead uv loafin' round ther postoffice an' store, that yer muscles are harder an' yer enjoy yer vittles better; an' in ther same way, in my opinion, the more yer exercise yer brain learnin' things, the healthier brain yer'll hev. An' what's more, yer can't make intelligent boys an' girls ef yer give 'em an old pigsty uv er buildin' fer er schoolhouse. I don't want ter be ugly er sassy, er twit on facts, but ef ther old schoolhouse an' ther kind uv cheap teachers that some men want are the cause of ther present condition uv some people in this town, ther quicker we git better teachers, build better schoolhouses, an' when we git 'em done thank God an' take courage, ther better fer all concerned, an' ther better for ther boys an' girls uv this town. I'm in favor uv this motion, hook, line, an' sinker. I'll pay my share uv ther extry taxes, if there is any extry, willingly, when I know that by doin' so I'm er helpin' some bright boy or girl ter know somethin' an' ter be somebuddy. I know that extravagance is somethin' ter be ashamed uv, but in

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my honest opinion stinginess ter children is mighty small pertaters an' few in ther hill."

As Still sat down, a burst of applause shook the house, and the motion being put to the meeting by the moderator was carried unanimously, not even Stephen Herrick having the courage to oppose it.

From this point the meeting proceeded to the election of a town treasurer and tax collector. The two offices were to be filled by the same person, and the town ring, through its spokesman, nominated Rhoderick Friend, the person then holding the office. They had not the slightest idea that there would be any opposing candidate, and the nomination having been seconded, another member of the ring arose and said that as there did not seem to be any other candidate, he moved that the clerk of the meeting cast one ballot as the vote of the meeting for the gentleman nominated.

Before the motion could be put to the meeting, Still again rose from his seat and said: "Mr. Moderator, ther gentleman who has jest spoke seems ter hev an idee that this meetin' is all cut an' dried, but I'm afraid he's goin' ter be sur-

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prised. It's customary ter see ef there is any more candidates before makin' any such motion, an' that bein' ther case, I'll jest nominate one, jest ter make things interestin'. We've hed ther same town officers now fer erbout ten years, an' bein' ez they're human, they've sort uv got an idee that nobuddy else can run things but them. Ther result hez been that things, in my opinion, hez been goin' almighty slipshod. Ther tax collector instead uv collectin' hez jest sot 'round an' let people pay when they got good an' ready. An' this town hez borrowed money an' paid int'rest on it, when ef ther collector hed jest gone out an' stirred 'round er bit, we wouldn't hed ter borrowed er cent. Top uv that, he's allowed some people's taxes ter run so long that they've moved erway an' then ther money hez been lost, or if it wuz taxes on reel estate, instead uv sellin' 'em up an' makin' em pay, he's jest gone ter sleep till ther town hez lost its hold on ther property. Well, then, jest before town meetin', when he's got ter make his report out ter ther town, he's sot down with ther selec'men, an' they've crossed 'em off an' forgive him for what he's done. That may be er reel lovin' way uv doin' things, but 'taint busi-

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ness.

“An’ now I’m goin’ ter speak erbout somethin’ that’s er good deal wuss. I’ve been lookin’ inter this matter uv collectin’ taxes er little, an’ I find Mr. Friend hez been doin’ somethin’ that is mighty sharp practice ef not downright dishonesty. Ez er citizen uv this town I claimed ther right ter see his books, an’ I find that he’s hed money on hand an’ lots uv it, time an’ time ergin, as tax collector, that he hez not turned over to himself as treasurer, when at the same time bills hev been actually sufferin’ ter be paid, an’ folks hev hed ter wait fer ther money ther town owed ’em. I couldn’t quite see at fust what his reason wuz, but I kept pokin’ ’round, an’ finally I found out. It wuz this way. He kept two accounts at the county bank, one as treasurer an’ one as collector. Ther treasurer account never run very big, ’cause he kept it drawed down pretty fine. Whenever he put any in that account, it wuz paid right out ergin. But he kept ther collector’s account jest ez big an’ fat ez he possibly could. Why? I’ll tell yer. Any int’reest he got frum ther bank on ther treasurer’s account, he had ter allow ther town; but ther selec’men never looked inter that

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figger on ther collector's account, 'cause he wuzn't s'posed ter keep much there, but ter be turnin' it over to ther treasurer's account. But there's where ther fat wuz. An' all that int'rest Mr. Friend hez stuffed in his own pocket, while ef he'd run things ez he orter, either ther town would hev got ther money er else folks would hev been paid sooner. Now you kin call it what you're er mind ter. Them's ther facts. We want er man who's got some gimp an' fairness in him, and I nominate Allan Carter, uv Bartlett's Neck, fer town treas'rer an' tax collector for ther next year."

A bomb bursting in the middle of the room would not have caused any more consternation to the "ring" than Still's speech did. They realized that there was a formidable opposition to their continuing in office, and they now understood the reason for the large attendance at the meeting. But they were determined not to give up without a struggle, and as soon as the nomination of Allan Carter had been seconded the meeting proceeded to ballot.

Each faction worked as never before, and when the result was announced, it was seen that Allan Carter was elected by a large majority. It was a

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bitter pill for the ring to take, and Rhoderick Friend, the defeated candidate, arose, and with a sneer remarked that he hoped the selectmen would be careful to see that Mr. Carter gave a good bond for the town's protection.

Before he could take his seat, Still arose, and with blazing eyes, said:

"Mr. Moderator, this looks like ernother case uv ther devil rebukin' sin. Considerin' ther large ermout uv unpaid taxes that Mr. Carter will inherit frum ther poor bizness ways uv ther soured gentleman that hez jest spoke, I move that Mr. Carter's bonds be made five thousand dollars bigger than ther tax collector's bonds hev ever been before, an' if Carter can't git ernuff men to go bonds fer him, I'll eat my last summer's hat. Ez fer ther gentleman who hez just spoke, he seems ter me ter be er little out uv kilter, an' I sh'd advise him ter take er little hard cider for ther next few weeks an' see ef he can't start his liver up."

Again the meeting roared with laughter, and again the moderator was obliged to pound on the desk for order, although he himself wore a broad grin.

When the meeting arrived at the point where

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it was necessary to elect the board of selectmen, the defeated faction attempted to prevent any nomination speeches, but the voters had by that time become fully aroused to the importance of the occasion, and the motion was defeated.

The "ring" nominated the three incumbents of the office, and their leaders appealed to the citizens not to turn away from what they called "faithful servants of the town," but to show their confidence in them by re-electing them. The opposition to the ring listened patiently and respectfully, and then two good men were nominated in turn by leading citizens of the town. As the second nomination speech was finished, Allan Carter rose to his feet and said:

"Mr. Moderator—When I came here today I had not the slightest idea of being elected to office, but I fully realize the necessity for a change from what we have been having in the way of town officials. I shall do my level best to collect the taxes of this town, but I must have good men to help me. Give us three selectmen who are in sympathy with me in trying to put the business of the town on a common-sense basis, and I think I can succeed in doing my part. The two gentle-

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men who have been nominated are as good as could be got in any town in this state, and I feel that in accepting the office, if they are elected, they will do so for the good of the town, and not because they want the honor of being selectmen. Now, Mr. Moderator, if there is any improvement in the future in the manner in which things are run in this town, the credit of it belongs almost entirely to one man. While the rest of us have been growling at the condition of affairs, yet none of us did a thing to prevent it. We came to town meeting after town meeting and spoke our minds, but did nothing. The result was that there was no improvement. Finally one man saw that talking amounted to nothing, and he spent days going around this town asking people to come to town meeting and vote for proper town officers. He got some of us stirred up to the point where we began to urge people to come out and do their duty, and you know now what the result has been in this election so far. I know what I am going to say will be a great surprise to him, but if you see fit to elect him to this office I know that he will see that it is his duty to accept. The man I propose to nominate is as honest as the day is

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long, and willing to give his time and attention to the affairs of the town, and he will bring to the board of selectmen a good deal of sound common sense and good judgment. I nominate Stillman Gott for the third place on the board of selectmen."

Another roar of applause, and the balloting for selectmen began. The result of the vote again showed that the old town ring was overwhelmingly defeated. The successful candidates were called upon for speeches by the delighted citizens, and the speeches of the first two selectmen chosen were models of good sound country sense.

When Still was called upon he declined at first to say anything, but the assemblage would not be denied.

"Feller citizens," he began, as he arose from his seat, "I'm ther most surprised man in this hall. I read once in er paper somewhere erbout ther office seekin' ther man, an' ef I'd known one wuz seekin' me I'd been out when it rapped on my door. I've been sayin' fer more'n er month that we'd ought ter hev better men in office, an' here yer've gone right back on my preachin' an' 'lected me, one uv ther poorest ones yer could pick out.

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I ain't no more fit fer it than er hog is ter sing in er prayer meetin'. It kinder looks ez though I hed made all this fuss, an' then turned out ther way most reformers do. They go 'round hollerin' reform, an' when ther dust settles down an' folks begin ter look eround fer ther dead an' wounded, they gen'rally find ther reformers hev got all ther fat places. Now, I'm mighty pleased at this vote, but I guess I won't take it."

"Yes, you will," came from all parts of the hall, and Still replied: "Well, ef yer insist, I'll take it an' do my best, an' ef yer find that you've made er mistake, yer'll only hev ter suffer one year, an' considerin' ther two good men you've put on ther board with me, I guess I won't be able ter do much harm, however hard I try. I thank yer ev'ry one, an' hope er year frum now ter hev yer feel ther same way towards me that yer do now."

As the election of the selectmen concluded the business of the day, the meeting adjourned, the citizens still gathering in groups about the town hall and congratulating or commiserating with each other, according as their hopes had borne fruition or been blasted.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

For several weeks after Edward Locke returned to Boston, life appeared to him like "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

It was very difficult and well nigh impossible for him to bring his mind and energies to bear upon his work. He mourned the loss of the girl he loved, and in trying to forget her, only remembered her the more.

But he came of a race of people who for centuries had tilled the rocky, sterile soil of Bartlett and braved the dangers of its stormy waters; a race that while never very successful, yet never knew what it meant to give up in despair.

One morning the editor under whom he worked called him into his private office and informed him that he desired to have him interview a certain capitalist in the city in regard to a rumor that the company controlled by the capitalist was about to consolidate with a rival concern.

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A short walk took him to the office of the gentleman from whom the information was desired, and Edward, sending in his card, was soon ushered into the sanctum of his victim.

"I see by your card that you are connected with one of the newspapers," began the merchant. "If you have anything to say to me, say it quickly, for I am a very busy man. Short and sweet is the motto today. If you have come in here to get any information about my business affairs, you may as well go out again, for I don't intend to be pumped. Now, what is it?"

"Well, sir," replied Edward, slightly nettled by his reception, "I have called to ascertain if there is to be a consolidation of your company with your chief rival in business. That's what I am here for, to put it short and sweet, as you say."

"I know nothing about it," shouted the angry man, as he turned his back on Edward and pushed a button on his desk to summon one of the clerks.

"Thank you, sir, for the information," replied Edward. "That is just exactly what we wanted to find out." And making a low bow he turned toward the door.

"Here, here, what's that you said?"

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“Why,” replied Edward, “you informed me that you knew nothing about it, and I thanked you for the information. If you know nothing about it, then certainly the rumor of a consolidation is not founded upon fact.”

“Sharp this morning, eh? Well, now, young man, let me tell you that I don’t propose to be interviewed at all upon this subject, and I don’t propose to give any information as to whether there is going to be a consolidation or not. That is what I mean by saying I don’t know anything about it. If there is to be any consolidation, it is a private business affair, and the public are not interested in any way. Now I trust you understand my position in the matter?”

“Yes, sir, I do,” replied Edward, “and I won’t trouble you any more. But if I find out anything about the affair elsewhere, I will send you word, as perhaps you would like the information yourself.”

During all this conversation the merchant had kept his back turned to Edward, but at this last remark he turned his chair around and stared at the young men.

“See here,” he said, “you are either stupid to

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the last degree, or the most persistent young man it was ever my ill fortune to meet. Now you go ahead and find out all you can. If, when you return to this office, you have obtained any information that is reliable and correct, I will admit it and tell you the whole story. Good day, sir."

Edward returned to the newspaper office sick at heart at the ill success of his first important assignment, and sought the room of his chief.

"Well, Locke, did you get the story?" was his greeting.

"No, sir, I didn't. The party you directed me to interview claimed he knew nothing about the matter and refused to be interviewed. There is no doubt that he knows all about it, but he won't talk for publication."

"Won't, eh?" replied the editor, grimly. "Well, then we must make him. We are going to print a story about that consolidation, and as we don't want to print an incorrect one, we will get all the truth we can some other way, let him see that we have it, and then he will, in my opinion, talk too much rather than too little. Wait a moment." Touching one of a number of buttons on his desk, a boy quickly appeared, and the editor said,

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"See if you can call William J. Winthrop on the telephone, and if you can get him, tell him that I am going to send a young man down to see him on an important matter."

Turning around to his desk he rapidly wrote a few lines, and placing the paper in an envelope addressed it, meanwhile giving Edward a few short, snappy instructions. "There, Mr. Locke," he said, "take that letter, see the party it is addressed to, and take nothing in the way of an answer but the full correct story, then see your close-mouthed friend and get his final answer."

Edward soon arrived at the office of the gentleman to whom the letter was addressed, and having been ushered into his office, handed him the letter.

"Nothing to say," was the first remark, as he finished reading the note. "Sorry I cannot accommodate you, but I don't feel at liberty to talk. Very nice of you to be so attentive and interested in us, you know, but really this is a private matter, so to speak, and we prefer to keep it to ourselves."

"But it is not a private matter any longer," replied Edward, with a smile. "We have a story,

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which, although incomplete, we shall feel warranted in printing. Now it seems to me that you would rather have us print the correct account than an incorrect one. We can head our story 'It is rumored,' you know, and thereby cover our retreat in case we are wrong. Rumor, you know, has winged feet, even though she is a little hard of hearing. I presume that you fear that a premature disclosure of your plans may work you harm, but it seems to me that a story half right, half wrong, would hurt you more. I do not mean my remarks to be taken in the least respect as a threat. You know the managers of our paper too well to imagine for one moment that they would stoop to that. But print a story we shall, and we are only anxious to get the correct one."

The gentleman hesitated a moment, and then said, "Putting it on that ground, young man, I think you are right. Now, I do not wish to be quoted in the slightest degree; my name must be kept out of the matter entirely, and if you can assure me that will be done, you can take out your note book and begin to make marks while I make remarks," he added with a smile.

Assuring him that his confidence would not be

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abused, Edward quickly took notes while the merchant sat back in his chair and rapidly told the history of the whole affair in question.

In one hour's time Edward returned to the office of the president of the company, sent in his card, and the next moment was occupying a chair beside the desk of the merchant.

"Well, sir, given it up, have you?" inquired the magnate. "Don't blame you a bit. Hard work to find out things that people don't intend you to know."

"But I have found out," answered Edward, with a smile.

"Found out! Found out what?" inquired the astonished man.

"Why, found out that there is going to be a consolidation. In fact, I have found out that it has already been completed."

"Young man, where did you get that information? If you will tell me, I will write you a check for one hundred dollars," said the now angry man.

"Couldn't tell you, sir. I promised that I would not reveal the name of the informant."

"I will make it five hundred dollars."

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"No, sir, nor five thousand dollars," replied Edward firmly. "I gave my word and I'm going to keep it."

"You are, eh? Well, now, look here, I am a little put out, so to speak, because the matter has leaked out, but the offers of money I have made you were only to find out what sort of a person you were. Now as you have got part of the story, I will keep my word and tell you the rest of it." And the merchant proceeded to relate all the circumstances that led up to the consolidation of the two rivals. It was the old story of a fight that had cost each corporation an immense amount of money before they had realized that the "dear public" was reaping the benefit, while they were only hurting themselves. By consolidating, prices could be maintained at a point where a better profit could be obtained and expense materially reduced.

As soon as the full account of the transaction had been obtained, Edward returned to the office where he was employed and wrote out his story for the paper. It was only an incident in his work as far as he knew, and the whole matter passed out of his mind until it was recalled by his re-

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ceiving a letter from the president of the new consolidation, who proved to be the gentleman whom he had interviewed, asking Edward to call on him.

That afternoon he called at the office of the company, and on being admitted to the president's room was greeted pleasantly by the busy man, who begged to be excused for a moment while he finished dictating some letters.

As soon as they were finished, turning around, he inquired in a quick, abrupt manner, "Do you like newspaper work?"

"Yes, sir, very much," replied Edward.

"Do you like it so well that you could not possibly leave it for a few weeks, if you were well paid for your services?"

"No, I don't say that. I like it better than anything I have tried yet, and I am succeeding slowly, but still as fast as I could expect to for a beginner. Why, is there anything I can do for you, sir, in return for the favor you did me?" asked Edward.

"Yes, I think there is. I have made up my mind that you are the person to get some information for us. You seem to have a nose for news,

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and if you are as persistent in getting information for us as you were in getting it out of us, you can be decidedly useful," said the merchant smilingly. "I have made arrangements with the editor-in-chief of your paper, who happens to be a friend of mine, to give you a vacation of four weeks or more if necessary, and I wish you would make your arrangements to go out of town for about that length of time. The matter I want you to look up is, perhaps, a little different from what you have been doing, and yet in the same line. What do you say to the proposition?"

"I shall be only too glad to do it," said Edward. "In the first place, I shall have the opportunity of returning a favor, and then, again, it will be a rest and change for me for a short time, and that is just what I want at present."

"Very well, as you have decided to accept the proposition, see your manager today and make arrangements to start tomorrow night. Of course, I shall want you to call here tomorrow after lunch in order that I may talk over the matter with you and arrange the plan of action. Good-by, until then."

And Edward, expressing his thanks for the con-

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fidence reposed in him, left the office.

The next day at two o'clock he called again at the office of his new temporary employer, and, seating himself in a chair at the side of the desk, said: "Now, sir, I am ready for your instructions and orders."

"All ready, are you, to start for either the north pole or China?"

"Yes, although it seems to me that it is quite a distance to go to transact any business and return in four weeks," answered Edward with a smile.

"Well, now I will tell you what I do want of you and where you are to go. This company has branch offices in every important city in the United States, each office being in charge of a manager, so called. He handles all receipts from the sale of goods, pays all running expenses, and remits the balance once a month to the treasurer's department of the company. Of course, we have a system of book-keeping whereby we are enabled to keep a check upon his accounts to a certain extent. That is, we know what goods are shipped to him, and we are supposed to know to whom they are sold, and what accounts are paid. He

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has authority to indorse checks for deposit only in a bank account standing in our name, and can draw against the amount for the purpose of remitting to us, but for no other purpose. If the amount received from cash sales is not enough to pay running expenses, then he draws upon us for the balance. For the past twelve months accounts received from our agent in Chicago show two things that are surprising. First, the sales have been gradually getting smaller, and, in the second place, accounts due us have been paid much more slowly than formerly. It may be that everything is all right, but I am afraid not. We want you to go out there and investigate matters for us, without giving the manager the slightest inkling of what we are doing. Then report to us, and we will then know what to do. It may seem strange to you that we do not employ some detective agency for this purpose, but I hope the man is innocent of any wrongdoing, and consequently I don't like the idea of employing a detective. You may think that I am splitting hairs when I object to employing a detective, and yet ask you to do practically the same work a detective would do, but it is a whim of mine and I

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wish the affair investigated in this way. Here is a letter of full power to act in the matter, so that whatever you may see fit to do will be authorized in advance and save you any trouble. I want you to start tonight for Chicago, and investigate this matter thoroughly. Do you know anything about book-keeping?"

"Yes," answered Edward, "I know as much as any young fellow who has graduated from a country academy and has never had any experience. That is, I can write a fair hand, add correctly, and think I can keep a simple set of books as soon as I learn how my employer wishes his particular set kept."

"All right," answered the president, "I will write a letter to our Chicago manager, telling him you are coming to fill the place of the book-keeper who has just resigned, and that will give you a day or two after your arrival to look around and size up things before you present yourself. Keep your eyes and ears open and your mouth closed, and report as often as your good judgment tells you to. Step to the cashier's desk as you go out and draw one hundred dollars on account of expenses. Your salary as book-keeper will be paid

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you at the Chicago office monthly by the manager, and if you need more don't hesitate to inform us to that effect. I will settle with you on your return for your service in the matter. Good-by and good luck."

CHAPTER TWENTY

A week later Edward was busily employed as book-keeper in the Chicago office of the great corporation, working, watching and waiting.

He had taken the first opportunity to make the acquaintance of some newspaper men, but all he could learn from them directly or indirectly about his superior in the office was to his credit. Apparently he had no habits, good, bad or indifferent, and the same report received from the newspaper men was confirmed by other persons who resided at the same hotel with the manager. He dressed quietly, occasionally went to the theatre, but on the other hand went to church quite regularly. Even his piety was not so pronounced as to arouse suspicion, and yet according to reports received from the Boston office, matters were becoming worse, rather than better since his arrival.

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Finally, one Saturday morning, the manager announced that he was going out of town to spend Sunday with some friends and would not return until Monday noon, and the opportunity arose for Edward to carry into execution a plan that was to bring about either success or failure and which he had had in mind for some time. That evening after dinner he returned to the store, and locking the door and pulling down the curtains in the street windows, went to work.

The books were compared carefully for the year past with the accounts of shipments furnished him by the "home office," and, as far as the receipts of goods were concerned, found absolutely correct. The sales books were then examined, and, as far as could be ascertained, the price set opposite each quantity sold was correct and compared correctly with each customer's account. Where was the leak?

Both the open accounts and the record of cash sales varied properly and naturally according to the busy or dull season in the business. It was going to be more difficult to find the hole in the dam than Edward had anticipated when he first began his investigations. The supply was con-

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stant and regular, the dam was apparently solid; not a timber gone, no stream of water gushing through a large orifice, and yet the pond was slowly but surely settling and the water becoming shallower instead of deeper every day.

A tired, perplexed man sought his bed that night long after the bells of the city had mournfully rung out twelve o'clock, and ill success lay down with him, and impending defeat, perched on the footboard, grinned at him, and would not let him sleep.

The next day was Sunday, but "necessity knows no law," and as early as possible Edward was again at the office. The amount of goods sold for both cash and the amount sold on credit were added together and then deducted from the total receipts of goods sent from the home office, and as a matter of figures Edward argued to himself that the stock on hand ought to equal the difference if the business was being conducted in an honest manner. The stock taking occupied him all day, but as the goods were all of one kind and most of them still in the original packages, it was a comparatively simple matter, the main thing being to keep a strict account of the differ-

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ent sizes and weights and carefully check up the broken packages.

Night came, and this work was accomplished, and the tired investigator sat down to strike the balance. There was a shortage of two thousand dollars, but this did not seem to be sufficient in the opinion of Edward to arouse suspicion in the minds of so large a corporation, extending as it did over a period of a year, and considering the amount of the business transacted.

What next? Was the money stolen from the cash sales? It did not seem as though there were enough of them to permit any considerable amount to be taken without arousing suspicion. Could he be taking the checks and collecting the proceeds for his own benefit? That was impossible, for all checks for the payment of goods sold were made payable to the corporation, and the manager could indorse them for deposit only. Again, he could only sign checks payable to the corporation in the matter of withdrawing money from the bank. What was the method used, if any?

Again the books were consulted and carefully examined. It was soon apparent that if the books

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were correct, collections of open accounts were remarkably slow. Almost every account of any magnitude showed that goods purchased were not paid for before six months after sale and delivery, and yet the parties to whom the goods had been sold were firms and corporations whose rating and financial standing were of the best.

As Edward placed the books back in the safe, and was about to lock the door and admit that he was beaten, it occurred to him to examine the contents of a small locked compartment used by the manager for his personal effects. It was a very hazardous thing to do, but it was the last resort. The door of this compartment was locked with an old-fashioned lock, but, after looking the whole office over and gathering together all the keys he could find, he was fortunate enough to find a key that, with a little filing, opened the door.

The contents were soon removed and examined. Fifteen deposit books of as many savings banks, all standing in the name of the manager, and an account book comprised the articles obtained in this manner. The deposit books showed an aggregate deposit of nearly ten thousand dol-

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lars, all deposited within a year, and the dates of the entries showing that money had been placed to the credit of the owner of the books in some one of the banks almost every week.

If the money had been deposited in the different banks at the same time, Edward argued with himself that it might have been the result of some lucky investment or an inheritance from some unknown rich relative. But the dates showed, on the other hand, a steady income from some source other than the unexpected.

Placing the books aside for a moment, Edward picked up the account book and looked it over. An exclamation of surprise burst from his lips, and with the book in his hand he hurried from the safe to the desk where he had placed the account books of the office.

The books of the firm, when compared with the small book taken from the safe, showed account after account still unpaid, as far as recent sales were concerned, while the small book contained entries of partial payments of the same accounts, the date of payment, the amounts paid and the name of the party paying being all given in regular order. Some of the older entries in

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the small book were marked with a red check, and on comparison of these with the business books the same payments occurred credited, but on a much later date, while all those entries on the small book not checked did not appear on the regular books at all.

It was robbing Peter to pay Paul, but how had Paul been "held up" on the start?

Most of the accounts Edward knew had been paid by checks which the manager could not possibly use, and must deposit. Again the private book was consulted, and in the back part was found the solution of the mystery. There appeared another set of entries headed "Cash," dates and amounts being written, and these amounts and dates compared almost exactly with the amounts and dates in the savings bank books.

So far, so good. Light was breaking, but bright daylight had not appeared as yet. Cash was being taken, and yet the cash sales were not lessened apparently. Checks were received on account of credit sales, deposited in the bank, and yet the accounts were not credited with these amounts. The water was getting deeper, but no clearer. What was the scheme? Suddenly an idea came to Ed-

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ward. The young lady typewriter employed in the office might be able to answer a question that would throw the needed light on the matter.

Locking up the safe, he left the office, and, taking a car, in a short half-hour was at the residence of the young lady, and in a few moments after he had been ushered into the parlor she entered the room.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Locke, but none the less welcome," she said, as she smilingly extended her hand to the young man, who in his embarrassment knew not what to say when she first entered the room. The pleasant welcome reassured him, however, and he replied: "You really must excuse me for calling before I was invited to do so, and especially Sunday evening, but I am investigating a certain mystery, and I think I have arrived at the correct solution. If your answers to the questions I am going to ask you are what I anticipate they will be, my task is ended."

"Well, knowing that you are not going to ask the all important question for every woman the first time you call, I think I can safely promise you that I will answer any and all questions you

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may ask.”

“I have noticed,” began Edward, his face crimson at her reply, “that you generally make the daily deposit at the bank, and I desire to ask you whether the deposits are checks, or cash, or both. You may naturally hesitate about answering such a pointed question, but if you will read this letter, you will see that I am authorized to ask you for any necessary information,” he continued, as he handed the girl the letter the president of the corporation had furnished him.

What a pretty girl she is! thought Edward, as he watched her face while she read the letter.

The light of the evening lamp on the table shone on her chestnut hair until she looked like a queen wearing her crown, and for the first time he noticed her regular, beautiful features and pretty hands. And what a pleasant voice and manner she had. How strange it was that he had never noticed it before, except from a business standpoint. And she made a fellow seem so much at ease! Why, she always seemed so cool and formal in the office, that really you never thought of noticing her looks or ways.

Well bred, too, that was evident, and judging

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by the piano, the books and pictures in the room and the rugs on the floor, the daughter of educated parents, of good taste and refinement.

"Mr. Locke," a voice said, "this must be a very important matter to you when you are so busily engaged thinking about it that I am obliged to speak your name the second time before you notice me."

The next moment Edward had descended from the clouds to earth again, and replied, "Yes, I am very much worried over this matter, you see, and so did not notice what you said—"

"What I started to say, Mr. Locke, was, that I am willing to answer your question. Yes, I generally make the deposits in the bank, and very seldom deposit anything but checks. I don't think I have deposited any money for a year, although I often did so under the former manager. I asked one of the salesmen one day about it, and he said that he noticed the manager counting quite a large sum of money in bills on one occasion, and the manager informed him that he did not deposit the cash at all, but went to the bank personally and exchanged money for cashier's checks payable to the treasurer of the corporation

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and sent them in that form. It is possible, of course, that the statement is true, but I never write any letter to accompany any such remittance, and if he writes the letters himself he never copies them in the copybook; on the other hand, in every letter I do write enclosing a check on account of receipts, he always states in the account I make that such a part of the check is for cash sales."

"Have you any idea," asked Edward, "what the cash sales have averaged the past year?"

"I should say five hundred dollars a week, and the expenses about three hundred dollars a week, not including rent, as that is paid by the treasurer direct, of course. I can only judge by the statement given me by the manager to copy. He has always had the book-keeper take off the books a statement, and then he always kept that himself and made out one for me to copy in his own handwriting. And now that I think of it, I remember that when he first took charge of the office he instructed me on no account to inform any of the employers of the nature of the statements made by him to the main office, and each night he locks the copybook up in his desk. You don't im-

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agine, Mr. Locke, that there is anything wrong, do you?"

"Miss Harrison, I don't believe that you would be any more willing to shield or assist a thief than I would be, and, therefore, I will tell you the truth, relying on your discretion and common sense to tell you that the less you say to any one about the matter the better. The manager has embezzled about ten thousand dollars, and I now have all the proof I want, and I know how he has accomplished it. He has embezzled some cash outright from sales, about two thousand dollars. That is shown by the shortage in stock, but the rest has been accomplished by withholding accounts paid by check and carrying them on the books as unpaid. This is an easy thing for him to do, as he personally opens the mail. The book-keeper never saw the checks inclosed, simply being informed by the manager to credit certain accounts with certain amounts, and as all bills were submitted to him before being sent out by you, he could easily avoid the mistake of having a customer dunned for a bill already paid. When an account remained unpaid so long as to arouse the suspicions of the book-keeper, he would tell him

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to credit the accounts with some amount which was easily covered by using the amount received from some other customer. Meanwhile, with the proceeds of other checks not properly credited but deposited, he was accounting for the cash sales. In other words, while he was stealing cash, his accounts rendered to the treasurer would, apparently, show prompt remittance of cash sales and very slow collections of open accounts."

"But, Mr. Locke, he is a man of the best of habits, or rather I might say he has no habits. What did he take the money for?"

"I will tell you. He is one of a very small class of thieves—a saving thief. One who steals and saves his stealings until he has got an amount that will satisfy him, and then disappears to live somewhere in quiet on his small fortune. Now, if you will excuse me, I must go, for I have a deal yet to do tonight before I cease working. I thank you very much for the assistance you have given me in this matter, and again let me caution you to say nothing about the matter. Good night."

"Good night, Mr. Locke; I should be pleased to have you call again, if you would like to, but trust our conversation will be of a pleasanter nature."

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And Edward, again saying good night and accepting her offer to call again, went as quickly as possible to the nearest telegraph office and sent a telegram to the president, saying: "Shortage ten thousand. Shall I arrest and convict, or try to recover money? Answer."

The next morning Edward received a telegram from the president, short and characteristic of the man who ruled and governed the great corporation. It was as follows:

"Mr. Edward Locke, Chicago, Ill. Convict and collect. Do both." "John Whiting."

One week later the money was collected, and the former manager safely locked up for the next five years. And it was fervently hoped by Edward that during that time he would have ample opportunity to memorize the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," or pursue the study of Latin to at least the point where he would know the difference in meaning between *meum* and *tuum*.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

A few days later Edward Locke presented himself in the office of the company in Boston and sent in his card to the inner office of the president. As soon as he was ushered in the president arose from his chair, and, shaking the hand of the young man, said: "Young man, you have proved to be just the sort of person I thought you were. I sent you to Chicago to ascertain if there was any stealing going on, and you not only found out that there was, but you also discovered who the thief was, had him punished, and recovered our money. Now you have completed your side of the bargain, and only our side remains. First, let us settle the money end. As book-keeper you are entitled to twenty dollars a week, which I am informed you did not draw, four weeks, eighty dollars. As investigator, if I may call you by that name—well, a good detective agency would have

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charged us eight dollars a day and expenses. Your expenses have been paid. Forty-eight days at eight dollars is three hundred and eighty-four dollars; as collector, you collected our money. Suppose we say a lawyer's fee of ten per cent., which would be one thousand dollars. Total, fourteen hundred and sixty-four dollars—round numbers, fifteen hundred dollars.”

Quickly pushing a button on his desk, he said to the clerk who answered the summons, “Mr. Simpson, have a check made payable to Edward Locke for fifteen hundred dollars, and he will get it at the cashier's desk when he comes out.”

Then, turning again to the astonished Edward, he said quickly: “Not a word, young man. When we buy brain, we expect to pay brain prices. Now I am going to make a proposition to you, and I want you to think it over and let me know your reply tomorrow. Brains today are a scarce article, and command as high a premium as, well, our stock,” he added with a smile. “We can hire all the machines we want in the way of ordinary book-keepers, salesmen and so forth. Outside of the heads of our different departments, we haven't a man in our employ whose place we couldn't fill

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ten times over inside of twenty-four hours. Good, honest, hard working fellows, all of them, men whom I respect and intend to keep; but the great majority of them simply machines, doing their work correctly, but mechanically. The moment a doubt comes into their minds as to how a thing should be done they have nothing to fall back on.

“Take the young man who writes my letters, for instance. Good illustration. Nice boy, graduate of a high school and all that—think a good deal of him—used to know his father—nice man. Well, I was dictating a letter to him this morning, and I used this expression: ‘Everything looks favorable now, but, of course, there is always a chance of a slip-up.’ Well, he brought the letter to me, I read it over—always read every letter; can’t afford to have him make a mistake that might cost us thousands of dollars, you know—and he had written it: ‘Everything looks favorable now, but, of course, there is always a chance of a slipper.’ I called him in and said, ‘William, what was your idea when you wrote that word ‘slipper’?’ I knew by the look on his face when I asked him the question that he didn’t have any idea about it when he wrote it, and was even hunt-

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ing then for one. He replied he didn't know, except that was the way his notes read. See? Just a machine. Just as much of one as the typewriter he pounds with his fingers.

"The height of ambition of most of our employes is to get a situation, keep it, and draw their pay regularly each Saturday night. Machines apply for situations every day, but brains we are obliged to hunt for with a search warrant. Now, you have got brains and a healthy ambition. You showed that by coming to Boston from Maine and striking out for yourself. You see, I have been getting information about you while you have been away. Now to get down to business again. We want a young man, in fact, we want you, to take charge of the affairs of our branch offices. Keep in touch with them all, investigate any and all matters which don't look right. Keep our managers up to the mark, have all their reports come to you, and keep me from being bothered by them until they are all settled, and simply become a part of the history of the corporation. Headquarters here in Boston, but liable to go anywhere in the whole country to look matters over. Salary, two thousand dollars a year and

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expenses. Think it over carefully, and let me know your decision in the morning."

That night Edward decided to accept the position, and, consequently, wrote to his parents and Stillman Gott of his change of business and fortune.

The replies of his parents were the natural letters of a loving father and mother, the mother's saying that she had always had faith that her boy would succeed, and the father's, a manly admission that he had been wrong and his son right in his choice of a means of "earning his living." But Still's letter, Edward read again and again. It was almost as though his good friend was speaking to him and encouraging him to even better endeavors.

"Dear Ed," Still wrote, "I wasn't looking for a letter from you specially, because you know there isn't no set day for you to write, but I couldn't have got nothing that would have pleased me more. I read her through once, and then I got my rifle and went up into the back lot and fired her four or five times jest as a sort of salute. Tom Eaton come down through the pasture just as I was cleaning up, and says he, 'What on earth's

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the matter, Still? I heard you a firing and thinks I, Still has struck more game at one time than I knew they was on the whole Neck, or else he's made a mistake about what day the Fourth of July comes on.' 'No,' says I, 'It ain't no game I'm after, it's a little celebration of my own.' 'Must be going to be married,' says he with a grin. Says I, 'Tom, when I get married it'll be about the time roseberries grow on spruce bushes, and you can ketch codfish all split and salted. What I am celebrating is Ed Locke has got hired by one of the biggest concerns in the whole United States, and is getting so much pay that inside of two years he won't know what to do with his money unless he puts it in barrels the way they do mackerel, with plenty of salt, and let it make its own brine. I reckon he draws about six dollars a day.' Tom haw-hawed, and says he, 'Tell another one, Still, before that one gits cold. You mean six dollars a week.' 'No, I don't,' says I, 'I mean six dollars a day, and you needn't leave out Sundays or hollerdays except once in a while.'

"Now, Ed, I'm just as pleased as I would be if I got it myself, and that's saying a good deal. Keep everything taut and every sail drawing, and

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'twon't be long before you will be earning twice what you are now. Then after a few years you can set back and laugh at the best of them. Don't burn all your powder the first year. Let them have it kind of slow, but keep firing. Blow your own horn, but don't try to be the whole band. You keep right at it, and do all they tell you to and a little more besides.

"Nothing new down here except the regular crop of children and a few deaths, and I guess you don't know either kind well enough for me to spend time setting out the names. Nobody has been sent to jail since I was, and nobody likely to as far as I know. The country looks pretty well, and I guess we are going to have a good year. Probably my being elected selectman has had something to do with it, though I haven't heard anyone say so. Keep your hand on the tiller and your eyes on the sails. Fair wind and fair tide for you now.

Your friend,

"Stillman Gott."

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

For months Edward was busily engaged arranging matters in his new business, visiting the different branch offices of the corporation, instituting a system of checks upon the different managers, and placing safeguards around the financial interests of the company. It had taken a deal of time and thought to arrange matters to his complete satisfaction, but finally he laid his plan before the president and was extremely gratified to receive the magnate's hearty commendation.

"Good, excellent," exclaimed the president, as he carefully read the sheets of typewritten matter which Edward had laid before him. "I do not see, Mr. Locke, where that can be improved. You have got the correct idea. Endeavor as far as possible to put beyond an employee's power the chance to steal, and then if he defeats you in that

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respect, arrange your financial affairs in such a manner that detection will immediately follow the first stealing. I do not know how we can avoid unintentionally tempting our fellow men when we are obliged to entrust such large sums of money to our managers, but I do believe that when a man or a corporation conducts business in such a loose manner that an employee knows that money will not be missed for months and perhaps years, a great temptation is placed before the man, and if he yields, the employer is more to be blamed than the employee. With the system as suggested by you, our managers will realize that it is well nigh impossible for them to embezzle our money and, knowing it, will be honest. It is our duty to our employees to make them honest men rather than thieves.

“Go right ahead and have our affairs conducted on the plan you have outlined in all our offices. It is possible that improvements will suggest themselves to you as you proceed, and if so, incorporate them. I leave the whole affair in your hands.”

The plan as suggested by Edward naturally met with some opposition from the different man-

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agers, particularly from those who had been longest in office, but the only reply from Edward was, "These are the orders of the president and directors, and as you are an honest man you cannot object to regular inspection of your books and countersignature of your checks. In addition to this fact, it is also true that the better report made in regard to the condition of your office, the better your chance of promotion," and thus one by one he made them see that the new departure of the company was not only a correct one, but one made for the benefit of the managers themselves.

The change had necessitated a good deal of travelling throughout the whole country and much hard work, but finally all the offices were placed under the new style of book-keeping, and Edward could rest for a while until the time came for the beginning of his regular inspection of each office. There would be no special time for his appearance at each office. As far as each manager knew, Edward was likely to present himself at any moment, and yet his plan was to visit each office as often as once in three months, and this meant at least half of the

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year away from the main office of the company.

One morning as he came into the office one of the clerks said to him, "Here is a telegram for you, Mr. Locke. It came about ten minutes ago, and the messenger boy said it was urgent."

Edward took the telegram, tore open the envelope and opening the paper enclosed, read, "Stephen Day died last night. Funeral Wednesday. Stillman Gott."

Without waiting a moment, he rushed into the president's office and said, "Excuse me for interrupting you so hurriedly, but I have just received a telegram informing me of the death of an old friend of my family, and I should like to be away for a week. I can start tonight at seven o'clock and be back in the office next Friday morning if necessary. I can assure you, sir, that my absence for that length of time will not interfere with my plans or the interests of the company."

"All right, Mr. Locke," replied the president; "sorry that such a thing has happened. If you find for any reason that you must prolong your absence, wire us and it will be satisfactory."

A telegram was sent to Still, asking him to be at the steamboat wharf the next morning, and Ed-

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ward left the office to make preparations for his journey.

Seven o'clock that evening saw him on the boat for Portland, and when the sun rose the next morning and Edward went on deck, the steamer was fast approaching Hardwick. As soon as the steamer was made fast to the wharf Edward leaped ashore and grasped the hand of Still, who stood at the end of the gang plank.

"Glad ter see yer, Ed," his old friend remarked, "but sorry yer hed yer come on sech an errand. Gimme yer bag an' I'll stow it aft in ther buggy, an' you jump in an' we'll git under way."

The two men got into the buggy, and the horse started up the hill from the wharf.

"S'pose yer wuz kind uv startled at gittin' er telergraph, Ed, but I knew yer'd want ter come, secin' ez ther fam'lies were sech old friends, an' so I sent her. No time fer er letter, yer know."

"Wasn't it very sudden, Still?" asked Edward.

"Yes, it wuz. I wuz over ter ther house soon ez I heard uv it, an' Sarah told me that Stephen an' her wuz settin in ther front room, an' she went out fer somethin' er ruther, an' when she got back he wuz jest er breathin' his last. Hedn't

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hed er sick minute in years. Heart disease, I guess. Nobuddy knowed what else ter call it.

“Ther Lord called him sudden, an’ Stephen answered jest ez prompt. Pretty tough on ther fam’ly, but er good way fer Stephen ter go, ’cause he didn’t suffer. He wuz jest ez ready ez he wud hev been ef he’d hed er year’s warnin’. Good man, an’ no better in ther town. He wuzn’t much uv er talker, but in his quiet way he sed er good deal, an’ none uv it never harmed nobuddy.”

“How is Mrs. Day and—the rest of the family?” inquired Edward.

“Bearin’ up fairly well, considerin’ how quick it come,” answered Still. “But, Lord, her sorrer hezn’t begun, an’ it won’t till after ther funeral. When’s he gone out uv ther house an’ she comes back inter it, that’s when she’ll miss him. They’ve been married er good many years, an’ each day ez she goes ’round ther house, each time she sets down ter ther table, she’ll miss him, an’ she’ll know he’s gone fer ever. I’m mighty sorry fer Sarah. She hez her outs like ther rest uv us, but she’s been er good wife ter him, an’ he wuz er good husband ter her, an’ she’ll miss him. An’ while ther Good Book sez there’s no givin’ an’ tak-

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in' in marriage in heaven, yet I've no doubt he'll miss her, too. Well, it's got ter come ter all uv us, fust an' last. I s'pose he's better off, 'though when yer come ter think uv it, Stephen wuz perfectly happy here, an' Bartlett's er pretty good place ter be in."

The two men talked together about other matters for a long time, and then Edward asked, "Is, er, Mr. Davenport here?"

"Hevn't seen him, an' seein' he didn't come on ther boat when you did, I cal'late he ain't comin'. I took over ther telergraphs fer Sarah an' Elinor, an' there wan't none fer him. Kinder s'prised me, ter tell yer ther truth, but mebbe they hed sent him word by some one else, though seems ter me I should hev heard uv it if they hed."

"Did they ask you to telegraph to me?" inquired Edward.

"No, they didn't," answered Still, "though that ain't sayin' they wouldn't ef they'd thought uv it. They on'y give me er list uv relations ter send ter, an' I sent yours uv my own free will an' accord, ez we sometimes say."

The five miles between the wharf and the home of Edward had now dwindled down to a short dis-

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tance, and in a few more moments Still drove up to the door of Josiah Locke's house.

As soon as Edward had greeted his parents, he walked over to the Day farm. He had known Stephen and Sarah Day since his birth, and he felt the loss of the honest old farmer as he would have felt the loss of one of his blood relations. And then again Mrs. Day had always been pleasant and kind to him when as a boy he ran in and out of their house, and he deeply sympathized with her. He was not going to their home because it was the polite and proper thing to do, but because he sorrowed with the widow and orphan.

He walked in through the door and into the front room, and found Mrs. Day and her older daughters and sons. The children greeted him and withdrew. Mrs. Day shook his hand and said, "Ed, it was reel kind uv yer ter come clear down here on our account."

"Mrs. Day," replied Edward, "I came because I wished to pay my tribute of respect to him who has gone. He was as near and dear to me as any of my own family, and I mourn with you and your family."

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"I know you do, Ed. You allers wuz er good boy. He wuz reel pleased when yer father told him how well you wuz doin', an' sed he'd no doubt you'd be well off some day. I wish he could be back here jest fer er year. Seems ter me I'd be different. We never hed no fallin's out, but I'd let him run things more an' run 'em less myself. He never sed nothin' erbout it, but ez I look back I can see now that I sh'd hev been jest ez happy ef I hed my own way less, an' p'raps he'd been happier," and the lonely widow burst into tears and left the room.

Suddenly the door opened and Elinor entered. As Edward looked up and saw her, he walked toward her and the next moment they were clasped in each other's arms, she leaning on his shoulder and weeping as though her heart would break, and he, speaking words of sympathy and sorrow rather than love, for Edward believed that his love for her was completely stifled.

In a short time Elinor became quieter, and the two young people sat down together on the same old sofa where they had sat the last time he had seen her.

"Elinor," he said, after a few moments of si-

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lence, "I expected to find Mr. Davenport here. Is he unable to come?"

"I didn't notify him of father's death," answered Elinor.

"Didn't notify him! Why not, Elinor? Surely he would want to be here. You could not possibly need him at any other time more than you do now."

"I need the sympathy of all my friends, Edward, at a time like this, but I did not think it was necessary to send for Mr. Davenport, nor do I imagine it would have been pleasant for him to have come."

Edward made no reply at first, but Elinor's answer seemed very peculiar. 'Mr. Davenport' and not 'Harry,' and she had said it 'would not be pleasant for him to come.' What could she mean? He paused for a moment and then said, "Elinor, I sincerely hope that nothing has happened between you and Mr. Davenport that has caused you any additional trouble."

"Edward," said Elinor, as she turned towards him, "it is a matter I do not care to talk about with many people, but I have always told you everything, and therefore I will answer you. The

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engagement between Mr. Davenport and myself has been broken, and broken by me. I realized that I could not be happy as his wife, and I doubt if I should have made him happy. I am only sorry that I ever persuaded myself into believing that I ought to accept him, and only fear that I have caused him some unpleasant moments which I might have saved him had I only been more careful."

Edward made no reply; it was not the proper time to do so. But his heart gave a leap and his love for Elinor, which he had thought was dead, sprung into being again with new vigor and life.

He talked with her about her father, and asked her whether she and her mother intended staying on the farm, and she replied that her brothers had advised her mother to sell the farm and live in the village until at least they could decide where to live permanently.

And then he bade her good-bye until the morrow, and returned home to meet some of the neighbors who had learned of his arrival and wished to see him and "talk over old times."

The following day, every man and woman in the town of Bartlett who could possibly leave their

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homes walked or drove to the Baptist church to attend the funeral and pay their respects to the memory of Stephen Day.

At the conclusion of the services, Edward walked slowly home with Elinor, saying all the comforting words he could, and yet realizing that her sorrow was too deep for present relief. As they arrived at the door of her home, he said, "Elinor, I am sorry, but I must bid you good-bye now, for I have hardly spoken a word to mother and father, and tomorrow morning I must start for Boston again. I do not know when I shall see you again, as I leave for the West in a few days on a long business trip. In fact, I doubt if I shall be able to get down to Bartlett oftener than once a year hereafter, for my position is rather an important one, and one which requires my personal attention most of the time. But I want you to remember that I have been your friend ever since we were little children, and always shall be as long as I am permitted to stay on this earth. And if at any time I can be of the slightest service to you or your mother, let me know, and I will be only too glad to assist you in any way. Good-bye."

He turned to walk away from the house, his

heart and voice too full of tears to speak longer, when a trembling voice said, "Won't you come in a minute? I know mother would like to see you again if only to bid you good-bye."

"To be sure," said Edward. "I had almost forgotten her." He went back into the house and bade Mrs. Day farewell, and to her also offered any aid in his power at any time. Again he turned to go, when suddenly Elinor, bursting into tears, said, "Oh, Edward, it seems as though when you are gone I shall have no one to look to for comfort and aid. I felt utterly desolate until you came, and then somehow I seemed to be able to endure anything. And now you are going away again, and I feel as though the very ground was slipping from under my feet. What shall I do when you are gone? My brothers and sisters have all gone to their homes, and mother has her own sorrow to endure without being obliged to comfort me. Can't you stay a few more days, just a few?"

And Edward drew the unhappy girl towards him and said in a voice choking with pity and love, "My dear little girl, I must go back tomorrow, but, darling, if you wish, how happy I should

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be to come again as soon as I possibly could and take you away with me and never leave you again. May I come, darling?"

"Oh, Edward, I could not leave mother now," feebly remonstrated the girl.

"Why, Elinor, I did not intend to have you leave her. I want her to come, too, and let me try to make the rest of her days peaceful and happy. Will you come and be my dear little wife? Can't you love me just a little? The smallest amount of love from you would make me happier than all the love of any other girl. Can't you, darling?"

She laid her head on his shoulder and said, "I can't love you a little, for my heart is filled with love for you and you alone. Dear heart, I know now I have always loved you, but I only found it out when I saw you after father died. I knew when I came to you and asked your sympathy and comfort and your love, that without them I would be miserable, and with them happy as a queen upon her throne.

"Come when you want me, and I will go with you and give you all my love in return for yours, your love that has never wavered, that has always been for me and for me alone. Go now, darling.

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and see your good father and mother, but let me see you again before you go away, for my heart will cry out for you from now until it ceases beat-

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The Bangor steamer was slowly coming up the harbor of Boston about a month later, and among the anxious watchers on the wharf was Edward Locke. The steamer slowly and carefully made her way up the wharf, the gang plank was thrown out, and soon Edward saw the tall figure of Stillman Gott making its way through the crowd toward him.

Grasping the hand of his friend, he said: "Still, I am delighted to see you."

"Are, eh? Well, I'm kind uv tickled myself. Can't see ez yer've changed much, 'cept I see yer growin' er mustash. Dunno but what I sh'd call it more uv er hair lip jest at present, but I guess it'll come out all right ef yer tend ter it an' kind uv nurse it erlong. How are yer, anyway?" was the reply.

"Never felt better in my life, Still. Now give

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me the check for your trunk and we will get up to the hotel as soon as we can. I have got the whole week to myself, and I am going to devote it to you in return for your many kindnesses to me."

"Look here, Ed, 'bout that trunk. Guess I'll hev ter git er new one before I go home. Almost ershamed ter bring it, but I couldn't stop ter buy er new one, an' I made up my mind p'raps I'd git er better bargain in Boston than I could in Bartlett. Yer see, it's an old hair trunk that belonged ter father, an' it's shed most uv its hair, an' don't look reel up an' comin'. I bought er bottle uv hair restorer before I cum erway an' rubbed it on, but it didn't seem ter do much good ez fer ez I could see," he added, with a smile.

They got into a carriage against the protests of Still, who declared he "could shoulder his trunk and walk jest ez well ez not," and proceeded to the hotel.

"Now look here, Ed, be er little careful erbout ther prices at ther house where you put me up. I've got fifty dollars I'm willin' ter spend if necessary an' er return ticket, but I ain't so darned anxious ter spend it that I'm goin' ter sit up nights ter do it. So jest cut ther garment erecord-

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in' ter ther cloth. I'm here ter hev er good time, ther fust one in my life, but I don't want ter spend all my money on myself. Thought I'd like ter take back er few knick-knacks ter sum uv ther children in ther neighborhood, yer know."

"Still," replied Edward, "I invited you to come to Boston, and you are here as my guest. I am paying all the bills on this occasion. When I first came to Boston you lent me some money and was the best friend I had in the world, and I shall never forget it. This is the first opportunity I have had to return the favor, and as a friend to me I ask you not to prevent me from having the pleasure of doing one-half as much for you. You cannot imagine how much good it did me when I first came to this city, an entire stranger, to know that there was a helping hand ready to be outstretched to me if the necessity for it should ever arise."

"Well, now, Ed, I didn't come up here ter live on yer, an' I gen'rally pay my own bills an' d'ruther do it now, but yer can do whatever yer want ter an' I won't yip."

By this time they had arrived at the hotel selected by Edward as the abiding place for his

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friend, and were soon seated in the room assigned by the clerk to Still, with the old trunk safely deposited in the corner.

Still walked around the room, looked out of the window, felt of the mattress on the bed, and, turning to Edward, said:

"I s'pose they charge fer these rooms ercordin' ter ther size, an' ef they do, this one ought not ter cost much. With two of us in here, I shouldn't dare ter take er long breath without bein' afraid I'd push ther walls out. I see they've got er mattress on ther bed. Ruther hed er feather bed if I'd hed my choice. Yer see yer sink into 'em more an' they're warmer. Should think anybody sleepin' in that bed in ther winter would want er heap uv comforters ter keep warm. Understand, I am not complainin', jest comparin', yer know.

"Yer see this is all new ter me. Been in Boston before, but it wuz more'n thirty years ago. Come up on er coaster when I wuz er youngster. Wuz here er week, but I spent most uv ther time helpin' load an' unload, an' what spare time I had I stuck pretty close ter ther wharf. Uv course, I went up street some, but not so fer that I lost my bearin's. I felt er good deal like er cat

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in er strange garret, an' so I stuck pretty close ter ther stairs, so ter speak. Put me in ther woods an' I'd come pooty nigh gettin' out by watchin' ther sun an' so on, but Lord, ther sun wouldn't be uv no more use to er feller in Boston than er palm leaf fan in Tophet. Now, you jest lay yer course ter suit yerself, an' I'll foller erlong somehow, an' try an' not look too green."

After breakfast the two friends left the hotel and devoted the day to sight-seeing, Still being particularly anxious to see the Bunker Hill monument for the reason that some person from Bartlett had told him about it years before.

As the two men stood at the foot of the tall shaft, Still gazed over the green slopes of the grounds surrounding the monument, and turning to Edward, said: "Ed, I wouldn't hev missed seein' this fer er good farm. So this is ther place where our folks showed their spunk. It kind uv comes home ter me, 'cause my mother's grandfather hed er hand in ther fight. I've heard mother tell uv it when I wuz er little feller, an' she got it straight frum him. He come frum down Salem way. I don't know nothin' erbout him but that, but I'd ruther come frum that kind

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uv stock than be er relation uv er king er queen er any other one card uv ther whole darned pack. I've got some grit an' all that, but when I read what them old fellers went through an' what they suffered, I tell yer I'm er leetle proud uv my folks an' my country."

The next day being Sunday, Edward had planned going to church with Still, and had decided to take him to an Episcopal church, where the "highness" of the form of worship was only restrained by the roof of the building; but unexpectedly at almost the moment of departure, Edward found that it would be impossible for him to go on account of a business matter.

He walked to the hotel, and entering Still's room, said: "Still, I am awfully sorry, but I shall not be able to go to church with you this morning, but I have got one of the clerks at the office to go with you, and I will see you at noon. He is a good fellow and you will like him. You see a man has come on from the West and will only be in Boston today and must see me. I don't like to do business on Sunday, but sometimes one can't prevent it."

"Guess that's so," replied Still. "Kind uv like

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some things down home. I don't cal'late ter cut any grass Sundays, but ef it wuz all cocked up ready ter git in, an' 'twuz Sunday an' begun ter look like er heavy shower comin' what would spile it, I sh'd git it in jest ther same. Some uv ther folks won't do it, yer know, but all I ever done uv it never hurt me none an' ther stock seemed ter eat it jest ez well."

The two men met again at noon, and after dinner went to Still's room. During the dinner Still had been very quiet and apparently in a brown study, and when they had arrived in his room, Edward inquired as to the reason for his being so quiet.

"Well," said Still, "I wuz sort uv chewin' over what I see an' heard at church terday. I never see er church like it before, an' I wuz kind uv green. Fust thing they stood up, then they sot down, then they stood up an' then sot down ergin. I didn't know what ter do, so I got one eye on an old feller in frunt uv me that seemed ter know ther ropes an' be enjoyin' uv it, an' ev'ry time he did anything I did it, an' so I guess they decided ter let me stay till it wuz over. Candles 'stead uv lamps, an' burnin' in the day time, too, an'

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ther minister went out once or twice ter change his clothes. Up ter that time, I'd seen er lot that wuz wuth watchin', but I hedn't hed much religion thrown at me. Well, finally things quieted down an' I noticed ther minister go up inter that old-fashioned pulpit, an', thinks I, ef he's off ther same piece uv cloth I shan't understand one thing he says, fer ef this is high church, it's so high I can't reach it. But I tell yer, right now, that sermon uv his on Saint Paul wuz er good one, an' I'm glad I went.

"Did yer ever stop ter think, Ed, what er man Saint Paul wuz? Uv course, ther rest uv 'em, Mark, Luke, Matthew an' John an' Peter, an' er lot more were all right. Did ther duty, but they didn't give up much when they became disciples. Jest stopped fishin' fer er livin'. Pleasant work, but mighty uncertain. But this Paul, he wuz entirely different. He wuz er worker all ther time. Jest think his life over. There he wuz on ther start, red hot ergainst ther Christians, breathin' out threatenin's an' slaughter, an', not satisfied with that, he went ter ther high priest an' got er sort uv warrant to arrest anybody that he run acrost. Saint Paul wuzn't one of ther fellers

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what did all his work by talkin', yer see.

"Well, he started out on er cruise, an' while he was goin' ter Jerusalem er bright light shined eround him an' knocked him over. Some people hev ter be knocked down before yer can argue with 'em, an' I guess Saint Paul wuz one uv that kind. Well, ez soon ez he come to, he didn't be- gin whinin' an' beggin', not he. He jest knew he wuz licked at his own game, an' he jest riz up an' says he, 'Lord, what do yer want me ter do?' Blind ez er bat—couldn't see nothin' fer three days ner eat er thing, but ther old pluck wuz left, an' soon ez he realized he wuz wrong, then he wanted ter be doin' somethin'. Well, he went ter preach- in' ther new faith, an' they tried ter kill him, but he got erway. Finally, they stoned him till they thought they'd fetched him that time, an' they left him fer dead, but he come to ergin an' kept up his preachin'. Then they put him in jail, thort they'd shut his mouth that way. But his luck held out, an' er earthquake come an' racked ther jail ter pieces so's ther doors flew open, an' out he come. An' blessed if he didn't stop on his way out long ernuff ter convert ther sheriff! How's that fer tendin' ter bizness?

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“Went ter preachin’ again, an’ when he wuzn’t preachin’ he wuz er workin’ at his trade, makin’ tents. Never heard uv er feller so res’less. Well, then he bearded the lion right in his den. Went ter Jerusalem an’ preached there, an’ they ’rested him ergin an’ took him before ther governor. Ther governor was er sort uv cheap politician, an’ he took him one side an’ talked things over, kind uv lookin’ fer er bribe. But Paul wuzn’t payin’ er red cent, but ’stead uv that blamed ef he didn’t go ter preachin’ to ther governor! How’s that fer cool? Then they shipped him ter Rome, ther head centre uv ther government, an’ ther ship wuz wrecked. Did y’ever see such luck? Well, ez nigh ez I kin remember, he kept on preachin’ while ther ship wuz goin’ down, an’ begun ergin soon ez he reached ther shore an’ got ther water out uv his eyes. But finally they had ter kill him ter stop him, but they didn’t do that till he’d hed time ernuff ter write er lot uv religious letters an’ convert more people than yer could shake er stick at.

“An’ there’s ernother funny thing erbout Saint Paul. On ther start he wuz full uv fight an’ ugliness, but when he got converted it took all ther

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meanness out uv him without hurtin' his pluck one mite. No matter what they done ter him, he jest gritted his teeth, spit on his han's an' took er fresh holt. Why, er week before he wuz converted, ef er man hed jest looked at him kind uv sideways, Saint Paul ud hed him down an' pound-in' his head in ther dirt before you could hev turned 'round.

"An' yet you kin read all he sed an' all he wrote, an' there ain't one spiteful word in it. It don't seem ter me that we foller ther teachin's uv Saint Paul ernuff. Seems ter me that we're too apt ter jump on er feller ther minit he makes er mistake, an' when he's sort uv stumblin' an' fallin', 'stead uv helpin' him up folks are more'n likely ter give him er kick an' send him further.

"'Member Ezry Dodge, don't yer? Lived up ther other side uv ther village an' died erbout ten years ago? Well, erbout thirty-five years ergo, before you wuz born, Ezry wuz er leetle mite ther wust man in some respects in ther town uv Bartlett. He could swear harder on less reason an' drink more liquor than any man I ever see, an' I've seen quite er number in ther days when I used ter go coastin' an' fishin' on ther Banks.

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He wuz half sozzled most uv ther time, an' ther more he got in ther wuss he'd talk. Good-hearted an' smarter'n er steel trap, an' captins uv vessels allers took him ef he wanted ter ship, 'cause yer see, after he'd straightened up an' got ther rum out uv him, er pleasanter hand you couldn't find in ther county.

"I went one trip with him ter ther Banks, an' I shan't fergit it ef I live ter be er hundred. Ther fust three days out he wuz sort uv taperin' off, an' then his rum give out an' he got crazy so's we hed ter lash him in his berth. I sot up with him one night er givin' him some medicine the captin hed, an' ef Barnum could hev hed er few uv ther critters Ezry claimed he see, 'twould hev made his everlastin' fortune.

"Well, finally he come out uv it an' when he got so's he could enjoy his vittles, he wuz all right ther rest uv ther trip. We got home after er few months, an' Ezry went round an' paid all his bills fer ther keep uv his wife an' children while he wuz gone, 'cause with all his failin's he wuz ez honest ez ther day is long, an' he hed been histin' more or less liquor aboard fer sev'ral days, when one night ez he wuz goin' down ther road ter ther

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village, he met old Elder Perkins. Ther Elder stopped him an' without pretendin' ter notice how Ezry wuz feelin' sez, 'Ezry, comin' ter ther prayer-meetin' ternight?' An' Ezry stopped an' haw-hawed, an' sed he guessed he wuzn't wanted there any more than he wuz thinkin' uv goin', an' he guessed he wuz more welcome in some other parts uv ther village. But ther Elder hung on ter him, an' finally he landed him high an' dry in one uv ther front seats. Ev'rybuddy begun ter nudge their neighbor an' prick up their ears, but ther Elder opened ther meetin' with er prayer an' er hymn an' two er three spoke an' then ther Elder started in an' told ther parable uv ther prodigal son, an' how he got so low down that ther hogs quit his comp'ny, an' that even then when he went home ergin, sick an' hungry an' lookin' like er tramp, his father hugged him, an' took him in, an' let him sleep in ther spare room, an' give him er party; an' then he went on ter say that no matter what we'd done our Heavenly Father would fergive us ef we wuz only sorry an' wanted ter turn over er new leaf.

"Well, that broke Ezry Dodge down, an' he sot there an' cried like er child, an' before ther meet-

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in' let out he rose fer prayers. Ter make er long story short, he wuz converted an' jined ther church. But ther old taste an' hankerin' fer licker wuz in him, an' there wuzn't er minit he wuzn't rasslin' with it. He made up his mind at last that he'd better go er fishin' ergin where he couldn't git it even ef he wuz bound ter hev it, an' so he shipped ergin.

"Ez luck would hev it, Pete Jones wuz erboard, an' he hed er bottle uv whiskey that he wuz er suckin' at, an' ther sight an' smell uv it wuz too much fer Ezry, an' one night he went below an' got holt uv ther remnants what Pete hedn't drunk, an' when some uv ther rest uv ther boys went below, there wuz Ezry, drunker'n er fiddler, er hangin' on ter ther floor ter hold himself down. Ther whole crew frum ther Captin down ter ther cook felt like death erbout it, ez they all liked Ezry an' knew how he wuz tryin' ter be decent, an' ther Captin told 'em ter keep their mouths shet erbout it when they got home. But Dan Morse who wuz erboard wuz one uv those pious people who kin talk an' pray in er prayer-meetin' like all possessed, but er man that yer wouldn't trust three feet in er hoss trade, an' he blarted

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ther whole thing all 'round ther village jest ez soon ez his feet hit ther wharf. Ther outcome uv it wuz that some uv ther church, what hedn't neither heart ner bowels uv compassion, they insisted that ther Elder call er church meetin' ter church-maul Ezry.

“Well, ther night come fer ther meetin', an' I got Allan Carter an' er few more members what hed some idee uv decency ter hitch up an' go, an' when we got there ther vestry wuz so full uv people that they stuck out uv ther winders. Ther Elder prayed an' ther charges wuz read, an' Ezry got up an' sed it wuz all true what they sed erbout him, an' he guessed it wuz no use fer him ter try ter be anything but er misrerble sinner, an' sot down. Then Deacon Childs spoke his piece, an' he didn't leave poor Ezry in ther shape uv anything, an' two or three old maids then bobbed their vinegar faces up an' told what er horrible shame it wuz, an' talked an' talked till what they sed would make er cat run her harness. Well, when they'd sed all they could think uv ter run poor Ezry down, Sophy Dodge, Ezry's wife, stood up like ther brave little woman she wuz. She didn't weigh over er hundred

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pounds with her winter clothes on an' she wuzn't knee high to er toadstool, but she hed spunk er-nuff fer er comp'ny uv soljers, an' she lit on 'em. She told 'em how Ezry had allers been good ter her an' ther children, an' how many's ther night he'd cried an' wrung his han's an' sed they'd be better off ef he wuz dead, an' how he'd tried ter let ther stuff alone, an' when she sot down she hed ther eyes uv er lot uv 'em leakin'. Nobuddy spoke fer er minit, an' thinks I ter myself, 'Git up an' say er word fer yer feller man,' an' I riz. I'd been er gittin' warmer 'round ther collar all ther time them hypercrits hed been speakin', an' I spoke right out plain. I sez, 'Brethren an' sisters, we've come here ternight ter make up our minds what ter do with Ezry Dodge because he's back slid er little, an' some uv ther members who think they air without sin hev not only thrown ther first stones, but they've got both han's full now er waitin' fer ernuther chance. But I want yer ter stop an' think er minit before yer heave ernuther. I'm goin' ter talk plain, an' ef any uv yer see enythin' er comin' yer way that is likely ter hit, yer kin dodge fer all uv me.

“ ‘What right hez Deacon Childs, an' Sister

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Graves an' Sister Pinkham ter talk erbout ther rum habit? Hev they hed it? Hev they ever knowed what it wuz ter never hev er minit when they didn't want er drink? No, sir, Almighty God either give 'em no desire er else give 'em er will ter stand it an' fight it off. They don't realize that when er man is soaked frum deck ter keel with liquor an' tries ter leave off, that it's hell fer him fer er while, an' that even ther smell uv it is like blood to er tiger. Ezry Dodge wuz down in ther ditch er wallerin' in ther mire, an' by ther grace uv God he riz an' scraped ther muck off'n himself an' started up ther hill. He'd got pretty well up when he struck er slipp'ry spot an' he slid. But, brethren an' sisters, he's only slid part way down, he's er hangin' on with fingers an' toes, an' all he needs ter git ter ther top is er little boost uv kindness. Git behind him an' push, an' don't git in frunt uv him an' kiek him in ther face.

“There wuz er woman once in ther Bible an' she hed been actin' like sixty, an' ev'rybuddy hed turned their back upon her 'cept ther sheriff, an' they brought her before ther Saviour. Did he sneer at her an' go over all she'd done an' tell her she wuzn't fit ter live? No, he hed pity on

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her, an' his great heart went out in sorrer an' pity ter her, an' he sed, "Woman, thy sins are forgiven. Go an' sin no more." An' she became er saint an' is in heaven terday. Brethren an' sisters, let's say ter Ezry Dodge, "Ezry, we're mighty sorry ter know what you've done, most ez sorry ez you air yerself. Here's yer feller church members, here's yer old frien's, here's er lot more uv mis'erable sinners, an' all we say ter yer is, go an' sin no more, an' God give yer strength ter keep sober an' God-fearin'."

"I'd sed more'n I intended ter when I stood up, but when I sot down, I'm blessed ef ther whole crowd 'cept ther few what hed spoke on ther other side, didn't bust right out er clappin', an' I guess that's ther only time that ever happened at er church meetin'. An' then ther old Elder started up er singin' "Praise God from whom all blessin's flow," an' they sung it till I thought ther roof would fall in, an' that ended that church maulin'.

"Ezry he kep' on goin' ter sea, an' he never touched licker ergin, an' finally he got ter be fust mate uv er three-master. Erbout ten years ergo, he wuz on er cruise ter ther West Injies, an' ther

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vessel run inter er gale an' 'twant long before she went down. The only man saved uv all ther crew wuz er feller frum Boston, who wuz er bigger drunkard than Ezry ever hed dreamed uv bein', an' he told ther story after he wuz picked up by ernuther vessel. Them two, him an' Ezry, got holt uv er piece uv er spar erbout big ernuff ter hold up one, an' after er minit er two Ezry looked at him, an' sez he, 'Bill, I guess yer need ter live wusser'n I do. My family's all pervided fer, an' I've made my peace with God, so I'll let go, an' you can hold on an' see ef after yer get home you can't be er better man.' An' he let go, an' he's in heaven now, ef tryin' ter live er decent life counts fer anything.

"I tell yer, Ed, er man what kin read about Saint Paul an' then git discouraged, hez got mighty little sand in his gizzard. I ain't no Saint Paul, an' never pretended I wuz, but I tell yer that story when I fust heard it put lots uv pluck in me, an' made me see that no matter how much the wind may be dead against yer, yet ef yer keep tackin' yer'll fetch after erwhile. There, that's more'n I've talked before in er year, but when I git ergoin' erbout Saint Paul there's no stoppin'

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me. Heavens an' earth! Here 'tis ha' past nine o'clock, an' I hed ort ter hev been in bed over'n hour ago. Good night, Ed, see yer in ther morn-in'."

And so the few days of vacation, the one play day in his life since he had left the district school, quickly passed away, and the day of Still's departure arrived.

The two friends stood on the wharf talking together, when suddenly Still turning to Edward asked:

"Ed, don't yer ever think uv gittin' married now you've got such er good start in bizness?"

"Still," replied Edward, "I am able to support a wife and myself at the present time, and probably shall be able to in the future unless the unexpected happens. So I will answer your question by saying that not only have I thought of it, but Elinor Day has decided to risk her future happiness by marrying me. What is more, we shall be married this fall and live either in Boston or Chicago, as my business interests may decide. I wrote to father and mother, telling them of it last week, and probably the letter was received by them about the time you left Bartlett. So you

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are the first person to learn the news outside of the families involved."

"Ed," said Still, "I'm mighty glad uv it. It's ther only way ter live, though things come so's I hed ter live ernuther way. But it wuzn't my own choosin'. Ez luck would hev it, ther one I wanted I couldn't git, an' ther ones I could hev got I didn't want, 'cause I couldn't figger out what I'd done so bad that I ort ter be punished that way. There ain't no half way ter married life. It's one uv two things, heaven er hell, an' yer hev ther makin' uv it yourself by ther one yer pick out fer yer mate. Though when yer come ter think uv it, 'stead uv bein' mate she's apt ter be captain. I know yer hevn't jumped inter it head over heels without takin er kind uv er look eround ter see where yer goin' ter fetch up.

"There's lots uv fellers pick out er girl cause she's good lookin'. Well, there's no harm t' ther girl, but good looks won't sew buttons on yer shirt ner cook yer breakfast. An' then ergin they'll pick 'em out 'cause they play er pianer er sing reel sweet, er some other fool notion. An' that's all well ernuff in its place. But I tell yer, when er man comes home at night after er hard day's

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work, sick an' disgusted at ther way things hev gone all day, an' sour an' ugly, he don't need no woman who can't do nothin' but play ther 'Maiden's Prayer' er sing 'Flow Gently, Sweet Afton.' He needs er sweet little woman what can come over ter him jest ez soon ez he's got his hat an' coat off an' sot down, an' git right inter his lap, an' put'n arm round his neck an' say, 'John, what's er troublin' yer? Now tell me all erbout it and let me see ef I can't find some way out uv it fer yer.' That's ther talk that sweetens er feller up an' softens him an' keeps him half-decent. Makes him feel that life's wuth livin' an' heaven's only er little better'n this earth. An' any other kind uv er woman hitched t' ther ordinary man will only make him wuss, an' spile her own life, too. An' when ther good Lord, thinkin' ther pair uv 'em hev been punished ernuff fer their foolishness, takes one uv 'em away, ther one that's left draws er big breath of relief when they think no one's er lookin', an' yer couldn't drag 'em inter married life ergin with two yoke uv oxen. Now, yer've been brought up sensibly, an' yer ort ter know what ter fight shy uv, so I guess I'm wasting my breath talkin'. But remember that

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love is er queer thing, and er woman's love is ez different from er man's ez chalk is from cheese.

“Er man hez an idee that when he's married t' er woman that he can quit makin' love. Loves her jest ez much, yer know; but what's ther use uv wastin' time er showing uv it after that? He feels like er feller chasin' er runaway hoss. He'll run tight ez he can go it till he ketches him, an' then he climbs inter ther wagon an' sets down, an' thinks nobody but er natchrul born fool would run ernuther step. Likes ther hoss jest ez well, an' wouldn't part with him, but what would be ther sense uv keepin' on runnin' after he's ketched him?

“I'll bet that ther bulk uv men don't kiss their wives once after they've married, when they'd almost eat 'em up when they wuz chasin' 'em before ther weddin'. Good perviders, pleasant, gen'rous an' all right, but they've stopped what they think is nonsense. Now, er woman's jest ther other way. They jest live on love, an' ther more they git uv it ther happier they are. An' providin' they don't find they've made er mistake in ther man they've married, they'd be willin' ter live in er

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sheep pen, if that wuz ther best their husband could give 'em, if he'd only make love to 'em once in er while; an' when they don't git it, they grow cross an' sour an' old before their time. So don't fergit after yer married ter make love ter yer wife jest ther same ez yer doin' now ev'ry chance yer git. Women are queer, an' yer might study one uv 'em er lifetime an' on yer dyin' bed yer'll still be er guessin', but they're better'n we are, an' yer couldn't keep house without 'em. Good-by, Ed, an' God bless yer."

And then the bell of the steamer beginning to ring the warning of departure, Still walked up the gang-plank and left Edward alone with the pleasantest thoughts a man ever has—the thoughts of the woman he loves.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

"Say, Allan, goin' ter ther weddin' ternight, ain't yer?" called out Still, one beautiful morning in September, as he stopped his horse in front of Allan Carter's house.

"Yes, Mary and I are caleulating on going, if nothing happens. You going?"

"Goin'? I sh'd say I wuz, ef I hev ter kill ther last pig in ther pen. Wouldn't miss that fer nothin'. I figger it'll be er bigger time than we hed Fourth of July in seventy-six, when we hed that big man down from Boston ter give us er speech, an' ther platform in front uv ther hay scales broke down before he wuz half way through. 'Member that? I shall never fergit it ter my dyin' day, an' proberbly not fer some time after. Never saw er person so worked up ez Aunt Melindy Merrill wuz. I wuz right near her when she went through, an' helped pull her out. No

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bones broke, but that best bunnit uv hers wuz all stove up. Never should hev knowed it, an' I'd seen it ev'ry Sunday that it didn't rain fer more'n ten years. Sails an' riggin' all gone, er big hole in ther bows, an' ther stern pushed in ez fer ez ther after hatch. Ef ever I see er wreck, I see one then. Well, ez soon ez she got her breath, she reached up fer it, an' I thought I sh'd die at ther look on her face when she see it. She bust out er cryin' an' wringin' her han's an' sayin', 'Oh, my bunnit! Oh, my bunnit!' Jest then John Duffy come erlong, and sez he, 'Aunt Melindy, yer husband's hed his leg broke when ther platform went down.' An' Melindy stopped cryin' jest long er-nuff ter say ter John 'git him home an' git er doctor,' and then she bust out cryin' ergin, 'Oh, my bunnit! Oh, my bunnit!' Never wuz so tickled in all my life.

"I swear if I wuz at er funeral an' happened ter think uv Aunt Melindy, I sh'd hev hard work not ter laugh. Well, I must go erlong, an' git fixed up fer this evenin'."

"Wasn't you surprised, Still, at Ed's having her after all? Mary and I thought Ed's cake was dough when Elinor got engaged to that New York

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fellow. We knew he hadn't been down since last summer, and the postmaster was telling some one that he hadn't seen any letters coming or going for a long time and he thought something was up. But we didn't know but what he had gone out West or to Europe where he couldn't send letters very often."

"No," replied Still, "I wuzn't surprised one mite. I knew Elinor would drop that New Yorker an' be on'y too glad ter git Ed ergin ez soon ez she'd got her senses. They say 'Love is blind' an' all that, but even then it hed ort ter hev some hearin' an' some common sense. I think love is more like er hoss with ther blind staggers. Can't see nothin' ner feel ther reins. Jest ez crazy ez er loon, an' d'ruther run inter stone walls than not. Ez fer 'bein' surprised, no, I wuzn't surprised er bit. You see things is happenin' ev'ry day right under our noses, ez ther feller sed when some one hit him in ther mouth with er sp'iled egg, an' we don't know they're goin' ter happen till they happen. Ed could hev ruined his chances uv ever gittin' her by makin' er fool uv himself, but he jest held right on his course an' sed nothin'. Holl'rin' an' yellin' an' cryin' baby

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never changed anybuddy's mind er helped er feller any.

"It cut Ed pooty deep on ther start, an' I guess it wuz some time before ther place quit smartin', but he gritted his teeth an' 'tended ter bizness. Uv course, I s'pose I'm sort uv predjerdiced in his favor, but let me tell yer that Ed Locke is ther smartes' boy what's been raised in this town in er dog's age, an' that sort uv fellers come out uv ther big end uv ther horn sooner er later. Ev'rybuddy's goin' ter ther weddin' they say. Guess Sarah hez give out er sort uv general invitation. Only daughter, yer know, an' she's always set er store by her. Church is all trimmed up with spruce boughs, an' ther ain't er flower left in ther whole village on ther bush. Choir is goin' ter sing two er three pieces, an' young Bill Brown hez been practicin' on ther organ till ther ends uv his fingers are most worn down to ther bone. I was up to ther village this mornin' an' it's all they're talkin' erbout, an' much ez ever I could git ther storekeeper ter wait on me. Seemed like war times. Ev'rybuddy holl'rin an' nobuddy 'tendin' ter bizness. Somebuddy wuz sayin' that they hed what they called er rehearsal uv ther

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weddin' last night in ther church. Elinor an' Ed pranced down ther aisle, an' Bill played ther organ, an' they went through ther whole rinktum 'cept ther last words. I sh'd think that would take ther fun all out uv it. Jest ez lieves rehearse my own funeral, seems ter me. But then, they hev so many new styles nowadays, that heaven only knows what they'll do next. I'm goin', rain er shine, an' git er front place down ermong ther mourners' seats, seein' ez my mother an' Sarah's mother wuz fust cousins.

"By ther way, Allan, you've got ter decide when yer git there whether yer er friend uv ther bride er ther groom. 'Twon't be hard fer most uv us ter decide, seein' we knowed both uv 'em sence they wuz born an' could pick either one uv 'em out in ther dark. But that's one uv Sarah's rinktums. She read somewhere in er paper that's what they do in Boston, an' so uv course it hed ter be done. Hope we shan't all decide one way, 'cause ef we git all put on one side uv ther meet-in' house it may give ther buildin' er bad list ter starbud er port. Guess I'll tell 'em I'm neutral, an' then they can stow me away most anywheres. So when you an' Mary git there ternight, ef one

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uv ther fellers who's seatin' folks asks yer ther question, yer'll know what he means. There's more 'citement in ther village than there wuz when Deacon Osgood's mare hed ther colic in front uv ther church last spring jest ez meetin' was lettin' out, an' that wan't no quiet ercassion either, by er jug full. All uv ther women er lettin' their houskeepin' go ter ther dogs an' spendin' their time gettin' ther best clothes ready, an' ther men er all settin' 'round ther stores smokin' an' figgerin' out how much Ed's salary is. Figgers wuz runnin' while I wuz there all ther way from five thousand dollars ter fifty thousand dollars, an' sev'ral small bets had been made erbout it. Shouldn' be surprised ef quite er few dollars changed han's if they're ever able ter find out anything erbout it. They tell me that Ed an' Elinor are goin' on er bridal trip ter Washin'ton, an' I shan't be surprised ef they see ther pres'dent. Well, I must be joggin' erlong."

The wedding night arrived, that night from which the whole town would date subsequent events, and the Baptist church was filled to the doors as no revival or funeral had ever filled it or ever could have filled it.

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The organist had played every tune that was appropriate to the occasion, and had followed these with several hymns, including, "Sister, Thou Wert Mild and Lovely," and "Come, ye Disconsolate," and a suppressed whispering filled the house. The appearance of the evening costumes of the Boston friends of the groom filled the women population of Bartlett who were present with mingled feelings of awe and envy, and each woman began to memorize and mentally copy the dress or hat that particularly attracted her, and which she knew as soon as she saw it was what would "suit her own style."

Just before the patience of the assemblage had become exhausted and the organist had almost decided to play "Onward, Christian Soldiers, Marching as to War," the bridal party entered. It was the customary procession on such an occasion. First, the bridesmaids, filled with pride of their own importance and envy of the bride, and then the bride herself, pale and wan from the nerve-wearing excitement of the wedding preparations, leaning on the arm of her elder brother, who was feeling decidedly out of place, and who would much rather have been at home chop-

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ping wood if he could have had any choice in the matter.

They were met at the end of the aisle in front of the pulpit by the groom, who had a do-or-die look on his face, and by his best man, an associate in business in Boston, who, having acted in that capacity a number of times before, regarded the whole affair as more or less of a bore, but one of those things one couldn't well refuse to do for a friend.

And then the white-haired and venerable minister descended from the pulpit, and standing before the couple in a few moments made Elinor and Edward man and wife. The organ played again, and the bridal party walked out of church.

And then, as quickly as they could, every one rushed out of the church, climbed into the buggy or carryall in which they had come to the wedding, and drove to Sarah Day's home to the reception.

The women, after congratulating the happy couple, went immediately into the room where the wedding presents were displayed, where every guest from the town of Bartlett found to her horror and indignation that the cards of all the

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donors had been removed by Sarah Day, who had read in the paper that it was the proper thing to do. Each woman felt that she had been personally insulted, for she thereby had not only lost the pleasure of having people notice her present, but she had also lost that particular feminine joy of calling the attention of her particular bosom friend to the hideous taste displayed by all other women in what they had given.

Nevertheless there was some enjoyment in the midst of the temporary gloom, for they had the one chance of their lives to study the fashions as displayed by the guests from Boston, and gaze with awestricken looks upon the quantities of silver and cut glass given by Edward's friends, and wonder for what purpose nine-tenths of the articles were ever intended.

The men had, meanwhile, hitched their horses to the fence each side of the house, and from natural diffidence, not caring to meet so many strange people all at once, remained outside and proceeded to talk politics, horses, and crops until one by one they were hunted down by their wives and dragged into the house. Then, having been led up to the bride and groom and having hurriedly

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said, "How d'y do," unless previously warned by their wives what was proper to say, they naturally drifted into the dining-room, and there, manlike, felt at home as long as the supply of food held out.

When Still was presented to the happy couple he took both of them by the hand and said, "I feel like askin' er blessin' same's when yer set down ter ther table, but I guess yer don't need it. Both uv yer hez got ther best person I know, an' what more c'd yer ask?"

"Elinor, be patient with him. He's nothin' but er man, an' they're generally hard ter put up with, though most uv 'em are good-hearted an' can be led ez easy ez pie, but they can't be driven much. Let him think he's hayin' his own way, an' you'll hev yours.

"Ed, be good to her ev'ry day uv yer life an' never quit lettin' her know that without her, life wouldn't be wuth livin'. They're different than what we are, an' allers let her hev ther best you've got in yer nature an' save ther wust fer ther outside world. God bless yer both, an' sometimes think uv yer old friend who'll never fergit yer."

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Thus ended the first lesson in the married life of Elinor Day and Edward Locke. The ship had been launched and had sailed away with a fair wind and tide, and the sky was blue and bright above her. May she ever find pleasant weather and prosperous voyages. But if storms should come, let them not burst upon her until she is safely anchored within the harbor of perfect love.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

"Mr. Gott, will you go fishing with me?"

The man turned around quickly and saw the bright-eyed son of Allan Carter standing by his side waiting with anxious look for his reply.

"Hullo, Archie, yer well nigh scared me out uv er year's growth comin' up behind me that way. What on airth made yer so still erbout it? Allers supposed yer c'd hear ther average boy er mile off when he wanted anythin'. What wuz yer cal-'latin' goin' fishin' after? Clams er blueberries, eh?" asked Still smilingly.

"Oh, Mr. Gott, Nelse Thompson had promised to take me fishing outside of the Rock today, if father would let me go, and I asked him and he said no, he wouldn't trust me with either Nelse or his boat. Then I asked him could I go if you would go with me, and then mother teased him and he said yes if you went. Won't you go?" pleaded the boy.

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"Well, now, Archie," answered Still, "I wuz thinkin' uv sort uv diggin' out er few more stones terday frum my upper field, but if yer think they won't spile, er ther bugs git inter 'em ef I don't pick 'em terday, mebbe I'll go an' see what we kin do in ther way uv gittin' er mess uv fish fer winter use an' sum fer ther neighbors. S'pose yer want ter start right off, don't yer? S'prisin' how you boys pester me."

"Why, Mr. Gott, we don't mean to pester you. I thought you would be willing to go. You know you most always do what we boys want you to," said the boy in a surprised tone of voice.

"'Shaw, Archie," replied Still as he affectionately patted the boy on the shoulder, "ef nothin' bothers me more'n you boys do, I'll go through this world on one uv those flow'ry beds uv ease ther hymn book tells erbout, though ter tell yer ther truth I allers thought sleepin' on er bed uv flowers would give er feller ther rheumatiz, unless they wuz careful ter pick 'em after ther dew wuz off. Now you go an' tell Nelse ter go down ter ther shore an' git things ready, an' not fergit ter bring more'n half what we need, an' I'll go inter ther house an' git my boots an' oilskins, an' be right

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erlong after yer like er sharp stick."

A few moments later Still was down on the shore of the bay, and soon the two men and the happy boy were aboard of the apology for a sailboat owned by Thompson. Still examined the boat critically, and turning to Thompson, said, "Nelse, judgin' frum ther looks uv this air boat, I sh'd think it 'ud keep yer gardeen angel busy all ther time lookin' after yer. Yer mast hez two sweeps an' er bend in it, yer sails were used in my erpinyun by Noah on ther Ark, an' there ain't no rope er line on her what ain't full uv knots where you've tied 'em up 'stead uv puttin' on new ones. 'Stead uv calling her ther 'Wanderer,' I sh'd call her ther 'Tramp,' er name that 'ud fit. Dunno ez I'm tickled ter death 'bout goin', but howsomever ez ther boy hez sot his heart on it, an' it don't look ez though er blow wuz comin', I guess we can stand it ef we git home by dark. Now, ef yer think ther riggin'll hold up ther mast, an' ther mast hold up ther sail, an' ther sail hold tergether, p'raps we better start. An' while yer gittin' down ther bay by ther help uv ther wind an' divine Providence, I'll be baitin' ther trawl an' overhaulin' ther lines, an' so on."

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The delighted boy sat down on the deck and watched the man bait the countless number of hooks on the trawl which lay coiled up in a tub.

"Mr. Gott," he asked, "do codfish and haddock steal bait like cunners, or do they grab for it the same as mackerel do when they are hungry?"

"No," answered Still, "they don't. Fish makes me think uv folks. Cunners is like ther folks what want ter git what don't belong to 'em by sort uv sneakin' away with it, an' mackerel air like sum people that sort uv figger that ef they jest sort uv make er grab an' git erway quick yer'll be so surprised that they'll be out uv sight before yer kin ketch yer breath; but codfish they jest open their mouths an' swaller bait, hook, an' as much uv ther line ez they kin, till it fetches up in ther bottom uv their stomach. An' then they lay there ez contented ez contented kin be, an' when yer pull 'em up they don't make much fuss 'cept sort uv hangin' back till yer git 'em 'way up to ther top uv water. Ter my mind they ain't what you'd call er reel brainy fish. Still, ez they make good fish ter fry er salt, an' ez ther heads don't ermount ter much an' air generally thrown erway, I never hearn anybuddy complain erbout

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their lack uv brains," he added with a smile, "though come ter think uv it, they ort ter know somethin', seein' they allers go in schools."

The boat worked slowly down the bay, increasing her speed as the wind freshened, and soon the fishing grounds were reached. The trawl was set, Still grumbling in a pleasant way all the time because nothing was "ship-shape," as he termed it. And then the delighted boy was handed a line and told to fish. Both men and the boy had caught quite a number of cod and haddock, when the ever watchful eye of Still told him that the wind was fast increasing, and that considering the boat and the poor way in which she was rigged, it would be necessary to start for home if common prudence was consulted.

"Nelse," he said, "guess we better haul that trawl an' see what we've got, an' then sort uv head her toward home. Look's kind uv bad overhead."

"Oh, now, Still, guess yer more scared'n hurt, ain't yer?" inquired the skipper of the boat, in the same drawling tone of voice in which he would have announced either the capture of a haddock or the arrival of an earthquake. "Still, ruther'n hev yer fussin' erbout ther boy, I'll do it."

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The two men proceeded to haul the trawl while the boy stood at the side of the boat and watched the fish come in over the side. Therewerethe cod, haddock, and pollock, and once in a while the great triangular, sombre-looking skate fish. When about half of the trawl had been taken in, the boy noticed that the captured fish were farther apart on the line, and that once in every few minutes only a part of a good-sized cod or haddock remained on the hook.

“What did that?” he inquired.

“Ther pesky dog fish,” answered Nelse, “and that settles our fishin’. They’ve not o’ny scared off ther rest, but they’ve stole part uv what we’ve ketched. They’re wuss’n er pack uv wolves.”

The trawl was taken in, the anchor hauled up, the sails set and the party started for home. But before they had proceeded a mile, the wind increased until it was blowing half a gale.

“Nelse,” finally said Still, as the boat pushed her nose into a sea and dashed the spray over them, “strikes me that considerin’ ther wind an’ tide air dead erginst us, an’ that this boat ain’t reel up an’ comin’ ez regards riggin’ an’ so on, ’twould be er good idee fer us ter sort uv put fer

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Gull Cove an' anchor over night. Frightened any, Archie?" he asked as he turned toward the boy at his side.

"Yes, a little," replied the boy with a look of confidence in his friend.

"Don't blame yer er bit, seein' ez yer've never been out'n er blow. Ef yer'd sed yer wuzn't, I'd thort yer wuz lyin' er else er half idgit. Don't want no boys ner men 'round me what ain't scared once in er while. Make's 'em more careful. By Judas," he added, "ef Nelse hed er single reef pint in his mains'l, I'd reef her, but I might hev knowed he wouldn't hev any."

The boat was slowly staggering into the cove, although it seemed to the anxious men as though every fresh gust of wind would knock her on her beam ends, and soon they were far enough under the lee of the shore to be somewhat sheltered. The anchor was dropped and the two men and the boy crowded into the small cuddy for the night.

"Now pitch inter ther rest uv yer luncheon," said Still, "an' call it supper, an' I'll be diggin' ther old boots, pots, an' kittles an' t'other furniture ou'n ther berth so's yer kin turn in."

"But what are you going to eat and where are

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you two to sleep?" asked the boy.

"Oh, we?" asked Still. "Well, yer see Nelse an' me never eat at night. We've got our growth an' we never eat no supper 'cause ef we did it ud make us kind uv pussey. Yer pitch right in an' eat. Ez fer ez sleepin' is concerned, Nelse'll coil himself up most anywheres, an' I'm goin' ter be on deck fer er while seein' ef that half pound mud hook'll hold anything. 'Taint big ernuff in my erpinyun ter hold er ground sparrer."

The wind howled all night long, and hardly an hour passed that Still did not go on deck and do something for their safety, while the boy slept the sleep of innocence and of confidence in his friend, and the good-natured, careless skipper snored on the cuddy floor. When Still was not paying out more line in order that the boat might ride easier, he was pumping out the water which came into the boat through every seam.

The morning came, and no signs of the wind abating were apparent, but slowly during the forenoon the storm seemed to lose its force, and finally it was deemed safe by the two men to start again for home. The sails were partly hoisted, the anchor weighed, and the return journey began.

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Still had asked the boy to remain in the cuddy where he would be sheltered from the wind and the flying spray, but the boy had recovered from his fear, and a certain excitement had taken its place which caused him to desire to remain on deck and watch the storm. The boat was laboring hard in her struggle with the wind and tide, but there was no reason to fear that the journey would be accomplished in a few hours with perfect safety. Still had gone into the cuddy for a moment when Nelse requested the boy to go forward and tend the jib sheet as the boat came about for another tack. The boy turned pale, but gritting his teeth, worked his way along the side of the boat which was lying down to the wind to such an extent that the journey from the stern to the bow was similar to that of a person trying to crawl along the roof of a house.

The rod upon which the jib sheet travelled instead of being made of iron, as it should have been, consisted of a small wooden bar, a little longer and not much thicker than a broom handle, and as the boy standing down to leeward reached out and took hold of the sheet where it extended out over the side, a fresh gust of wind brought

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an additional strain upon the stick and it yielded to this last call upon it and broke. The sheet thus released instantly run through the boy's hand, he lost his balance, and the next moment was overboard.

Still had reached the deck just as the accident happened, and in the same moment that he called out to the frightened skipper to bring the boat about, sprang into the water after the boy. As he jumped, he saw the white face of the boy come to the top of a wave far astern and then go out of sight in the trough of the sea. The man lifted himself above the waves every few strokes as he swam in the direction in which he had last seen the boy, meanwhile calling out to him to keep up his courage, and in a few moments, which seemed to the anxious man like the passing of ages, he got near enough to see the child's form sinking slowly beneath the cold waters of the bay. Taking a deep breath he dove down into the water, and opening his eyes glared through the water for the drowning boy. As the seconds passed in his search, his pent-up breath seemed about to burst through his chest, and the man realized that he must soon turn again to the top or perish. As

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with one despairing look around he started to turn, his hand grasped the clothing of the boy beneath him, and a few desperate kicks born of the strength of victory brought the two to the open air again.

As Still cleared the water from his eyes, the boat rushed down upon him, and the strong hand of the skipper grasped him by the collar and dragged them to a place of safety.

"Is he dead?" gasped the frightened man.

"'Tend ter yer blamed old sea toad, yer purple-headed idgit, er we'll all be overboard ergin," replied Still, as he hurried into the cuddy with the half-conscious boy in his arms. He stripped him quickly of his wet clothing, and placing him in the berth, piled over him all the coats and comforters he could find, and then filling the tea-kettle with water, placed it on the small rusty stove, in which he had built a fire. The small cuddy soon got warm, and Still reaching under the bed clothes found that the boy was perspiring gently and sleeping the sleep of exhaustion. Putting some more wood in the stove he went on deck and faced the horror-stricken Thompson.

"Nelse," he said, as he looked at the skipper

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with blazing eyes, "I ain't er goin' ter tell yer now what I think uv yer er yer condemned old boat, 'cause I'd properly be sorry fer it bimeby. But ef ever you ketch me on yer old scow ergin it'll be because I've taken er sleepin' powder an' they've brung me erboard."

The boat soon arrived at the wharf, and Still, wrapping Archie in the coats and comforters, ran up through the fields with the boy in his arms, and gently laid him on the bed in the small bedroom of his father's house.

"Don't git frightened," he said to the surprised parents, "he's all right. He's been overboard, an' I after him, an' he's ther best fish I ever pulled out uv ther water. All right now, ain't yer, Archie?" he asked of the boy, who smilingly nodded assent to the question. "Well, then," said Still, "ez that's off'n my mind, I guess I'll go home an' change my clothes. Folks always say yer never ketch cold frum salt water, but I guess they must hev meant in ther summer time, an' not late in ther fall, ez I'm feelin' er leetle mite chilly round ther edges."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

“Why, Tiger, what brings you over here?” questioned Mary Carter the next morning. She had opened the back door of the house, and the next moment Still’s dog had bounded into the room and leaped upon her in a very excited manner. “Want something to eat, or is your master coming?” As she spoke to the dog, she noticed a bit of paper tied to his collar, and immediately saw it was a note addressed to Allan Carter. Stepping to the door again, she called out to her husband, who was at the barn, “Allan, come in just as quick as you can. Something has happened to Stillman Gott.”

Mr. Carter came into the house, took the note handed him by his wife, and reading it, turned and said in an excited tone of voice:

“Mary, get your things on just as quick as you can. Still is sick abed, and wants you and me

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to come over there. I'll go out and harness the horse, and you pick up a few things to eat, and we'll go over. I'll have to leave you there probably, while I go for the doctor."

They bustled around, and a short half-hour saw them at Still's little home. While Mrs. Carter made a fire and "got things to rights," as she termed it, Allan went into the bedroom and taking a seat by the side of the sick man, asked, "Why, Still, what is the matter with you?"

"Allan," said Still, "not bein' er doctor, I dunno. But I hed er chill in ther night, an' I feel all stuffed up. May be one thing an' may be another. Guess I'm too old to hev croup, an' 'taint er broken leg. Ef er hoss wuz actin' ther way I feel, I sh'd say he hed ther heaves. Any rate, ef not too much trouble fer yer, I wish yer'd drive over an' git Doctor Lufkin. I never hed any use fer him 'till now, but seein' ez he makes his livin' off'n sick folks, guess it's my turn ter help support him. Hev Mary, if she will, make me some hot drink uv some kind er ruther an' I'll stiver erlong somehow till you git back. Better put er hot brick ter my feet, too."

Two hours from that time, Allan Carter and

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Dr. Lufkin stood by the bedside of the sick man. As he heard them come into the room, he opened his eyes and smilingly said:

"Hello, Doc. Hain't seen yer since I kidnapped yer an' took yer ont'er Sheep island. Yer've got er good chance ter git even now, although I'd like ter hev yer wait till I feel a little smarter. Ain't feelin' real kinky terday."

The doctor made no reply, but took Still's pulse and temperature, asked him a few questions, and, turning to Mrs. Carter, said:

"Mrs. Carter, either you or Allan, or at least some one, must stay with Still for a few days, as he will need constant care."

"What's the matter with me, doctor?" inquired Still.

"Pneumonia," answered the doctor.

"Am I pooty sick?"

"Not yet," was the cautious reply of the physician.

"Goin' ter be?" was the further question.

"I'm afraid, Still, that you are going to be seriously ill."

"Kind uv mean thing ter have, I guess. Kind uv dangerous, ain't it?"

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"Yes, very dangerous in your case, Still. You are a sensible fellow, and I am going to be truthful with you," answered the doctor, gravely.

"Yes," answered Still, "I want ther truth. It's bad ernough ter lie to er well man, let erlone er sick one. I don't know nothin' erbout noomony, an' you do. So you take hold an' run things ter suit yerself. You're captain this trip an' I don't amount ter hand er cook, so I'll jest lay here an' mind orders. If I'm goin' ter git well, all right, an' if I ain't, why, I s'pose that's all right. Guess I can be spared out uv this town ez well ez any-buddy."

"Why, Still," said Mrs. Carter, "you mustn't give up that way. "It's your duty to try to live."

"Mary, don't yer be erfraid but what I'll try ter live. Guess most people don't figger on ther duty part much, howsomever, when they try ter keep erlive. Life means er good deal ter me yet. I jest wanted ter say that I wuz sort uv resigned ter which ever way it went, and not that I wuz tired uv this world. It's an old world, but it ain't wore out yet. Head feels kind uv heavy; guess I'll quit talkin' an' go ter sleep."

And the sick man closed his eyes and soon was

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asleep in the heavy, stupid sleep that always accompanies pneumonia.

For days the doctor, assisted by Allan and Mary Carter, worked unceasingly for the life of their friend, hoping against hope. At times he would appear to be better, and then the dread disease would start with renewed vigor, and despair would come in and drive hope away.

The critical day came when the question of life or death for Still was to be decided. All day long he had been slowly sinking, but late in the afternoon his brain became clearer and the full light of reason returned to his eyes.

"What day is it, doctor?" he whispered.

"Thursday, Still," was the reply.

"Am I goin' ter live?" was the next question.

"I'm afraid not, Still, but you know while there's life, there's hope," the doctor answered.

The sick man was quiet for a few moments, and apparently had gone to sleep again. Soon, however, he again opened his eyes and said:

"Allan and Mary, let me take yer hands in mine. I guess I'm er goin', an' I want ter bid yer good-by. When I wuz er little feller an' I got tired I used ter go an' hunt up my mother.

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I'm awfully tired now, an' I guess I'll go an' find her ergin."

He closed his eyes and soon fell asleep. The hours slowly passed away, disturbed only by the ticking of the clock, and as the sun slowly sank behind the curtain of spruces in the pasture back of the little home, the spirit of Stillman Gott passed from this earth to the world beyond.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

The day of the funeral arrived, and almost every person in the town of Bartlett assembled in the Baptist Church, where Still had attended worship so many years. The customary hymns had been sung by the choir, and the white-haired minister had offered his petition to the Almighty in behalf of the deceased.

There was a slight pause, and then the minister arose and said: "It has seemed fit and proper that this service should be held in the church rather than in the humble home of our deceased friend, for two reasons. First, because it would have been impossible for all those who desired to pay the last tribute of respect to Stillman Gott to have been accommodated there, and secondly, because he wished certain information to be imparted to the people of this town, and it was decided to have as many as possible gather together

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on the day of the funeral for that purpose. The information will be given by Judge Eaton at the end of the services, and will consist of the reading of the last will and testament of our friend.

“The wishes of the deceased were that these services should be simple and in keeping with the life he led, and therefore I shall not preach any funeral sermon nor make any extended remarks. I simply wish to call attention to the life of our friend, because I believe there were things in that life that we should consider, things for us to imitate. We read in the good book the parable of the talents, and we know that we are taught to use all the power and intellect given us, not for our own good alone, but rather for the good of those around us, so that when the time comes for an accounting, we, too, can hear the Master say: ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’ Almighty God endowed Stillman Gott with a certain amount of brains, a good deal of common sense and a natural desire to be honest and industrious.

“All of these talents he used to the best of his ability, and as we look back on this well spent life we see a good deal that is worthy of imitation. In later years it pleased the Almighty to cause

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Stillman Gott to become possessed of quite a small fortune for this section of the country, and yet he continued to live the same modest kind of a life, spending no more money on himself than before, and in no way showing that wealth had affected his habits of industry or his good-hearted, pleasant way of looking at the world. For several years I have been the very willing, but unknown dispenser of his charities, he believing in the biblical doctrine that his right hand should not know what his left hand did. Many persons in this town now know for the first time whence the help came whenever they needed it. They knew before that directly the assistance came from me, and while at the same time they were informed that I was acting for some one other than myself, they were also told that I had solemnly promised that I would not reveal the name of the donor as long as he lived. He and I had many an argument over the question.

“I always contended that persons preferred to know who helped them, in order that they might show some signs of gratitude, some sign that they fully appreciated what was done for them. To all my arguments he invariably turned a deaf ear,

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saying in his quaint, dry way: 'They need the help, but I don't need the thanks.' He has gone from among us, and we shall never see him again on this earth, but he has left a memory behind him that will become stronger and better each year until time shall be no more. God grant that each one of us may find something in this life that has passed the recollection of which will make us better men and women."

As the minister ceased speaking, there was a moment of absolute quiet, and then Squire Eaton stepped forward, faced the audience, and slowly putting on his spectacles drew from his pocket a folded paper.

"Friends of Stillman Gott," he began, "it will not be necessary for me to speak of the deceased after what has already been said, but I will simply carry out his wishes. After Mr. Gott sold his granite quarry, he came into my office and told me what he had done, gave me the check that he had received for the property, and desired me to go to Boston and cash it. I informed him that I could get the money that the check called for from the nearest bank, as it was a certified check, but he insisted that I do as he requested, as he

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did not desire any one to know how much money he had received.

“As soon as I had received the money, he directed me to invest the same in a safe manner, and keep the principal for him, after taking out of the same whatever was right for my own services. I have continued to do so ever since that time down to the date of his death, never knowing, however, what he did with said income. I called his attention on one occasion to the amounts I had paid him during a year, and suggested that it was a little dangerous keeping so much money in the house.

“I knew he did not spend it on himself, and therefore, assumed he had it laid away. The only answer I ever got was, ‘Judge, if any one ever breaks into my house hunting for money, they’ll need a search warrant.’ Knowing as I did that our minister was assisting people during the past few years in a much larger degree than he had previously been able to do, I began to suspect the source of his supply of money; but as Mr. Gott had not seen fit to inform me, I respected his wishes enough not to attempt to ascertain what he did with his money, and consequently have

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never known definitely until today what became of his income, although having read his will at the time he made it I naturally knew what disposition he made of his property after his decease. I will now read the will :

“ ‘This is the last will and also the first one of Stillman Gott, of the town of Bartlett, Norfolk County, State of Maine, U. S. A. First: I want all my debts paid that I haven’t had time to pay myself.

“ ‘Second: I want to be laid beside my mother and father in the old graveyard, and a gravestone put up to me. The inscription on the stone to be as follows: “Stillman Gott, aged ——,” and then put on the years and months. Then below as follows: “He did the best he could.”

“ ‘Third: The Lord, for some reason I never could understand, never brought things around so that I ever was able to get a wife or have any children, although no man ever lived that would like to have had them more than I would. I never had a brother and only one sister, and so when I go there won’t be any of my family left except some relatives that are so far off that I never kept track of them. So I have been obliged to look

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around for some way to dispose of my property and have decided as follows:

“I want all the property in the way of my little farm and the stock on it sold, and the money put out at interest in some safe way, and then I want all of this and all my other property now in the hands of Squire Eaton turned over to the selectmen of the town of Bartlett at the time of my death, to be held and taken care of by them as long as they hold office, and then by whoever come after them as selectmen, and so on forever as trustees. They are to invest it in a prudent way, looking out for safe investments and dodging all gold mine schemes and wildeat stuff, and always bearing in mind that the principal is worth more than the interest.

“The income I want used in this way: Any child living in Bartlett that is needy, I don't care whether black or white or what ticket their father votes, is to be taken care of and kept fed and clothed, and given just as good an education as would be fitting, always bearing in mind that nobody ever knew too much, and at the same time that the kind of seed you are going to sow depends a good deal on the nature of the soil. I leave this

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matter to the horse sense of the selectmen. If that does not use the whole income up, the balance is to be used helping any man or woman that needs help, looking after the women first and the men next and being very careful not to encourage laziness.

“ ‘Don’t help any until they have done all they could themselves. If it should happen in any year that the whole income should not be used as I have planned, then the selectmen can use any balance of income to help any poor or needy people in any of the surrounding towns.’ ”

For a few moments after the voice of the lawyer ceased a solemn silence filled the church, and then the final prayer was said by the aged clergyman, and slowly and reverently the congregation moved out of the church to the little graveyard adjoining.

There by the side of his parents and sister, on the side of the hill overlooking the bay and Sheep island, they laid all that was mortal of Stillman Gott to await the sounding of the last trump.

And then Edward and Elinor Locke planted at the head of the grave a small moss rose bush. Still had often remarked to Edward when speaking of flowers that he particularly admired the

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moss rose. It was a flower that had always grown in his mother's garden during her lifetime, and he looked upon it as the typical flower of that section of the country in which he had always lived, for he said the moss on the rose always reminded him of the gray ledges and the trunks of the spruce and pine trees to which the moss clung.

There let him lie, with the grass and flowers of summer growing over his grave and the weeping rains and sheltering snows of winter falling upon it, until the great day when all the world shall come before the Almighty to be judged according to their respective deeds upon earth.

Let his plea to the great question be the epitaph on his gravestone, chosen by himself,

“ HE DID THE BEST HE COULD.”



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